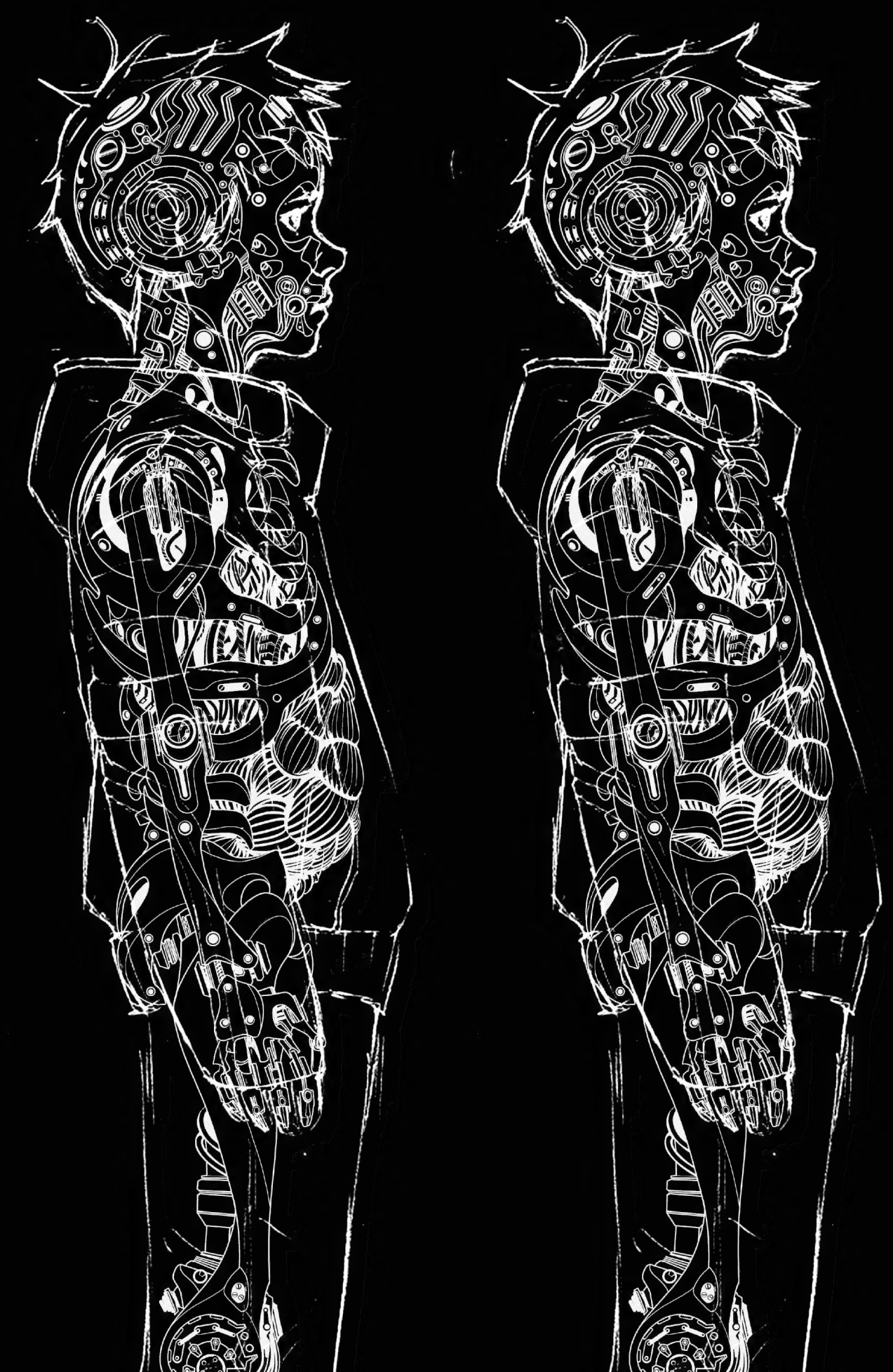
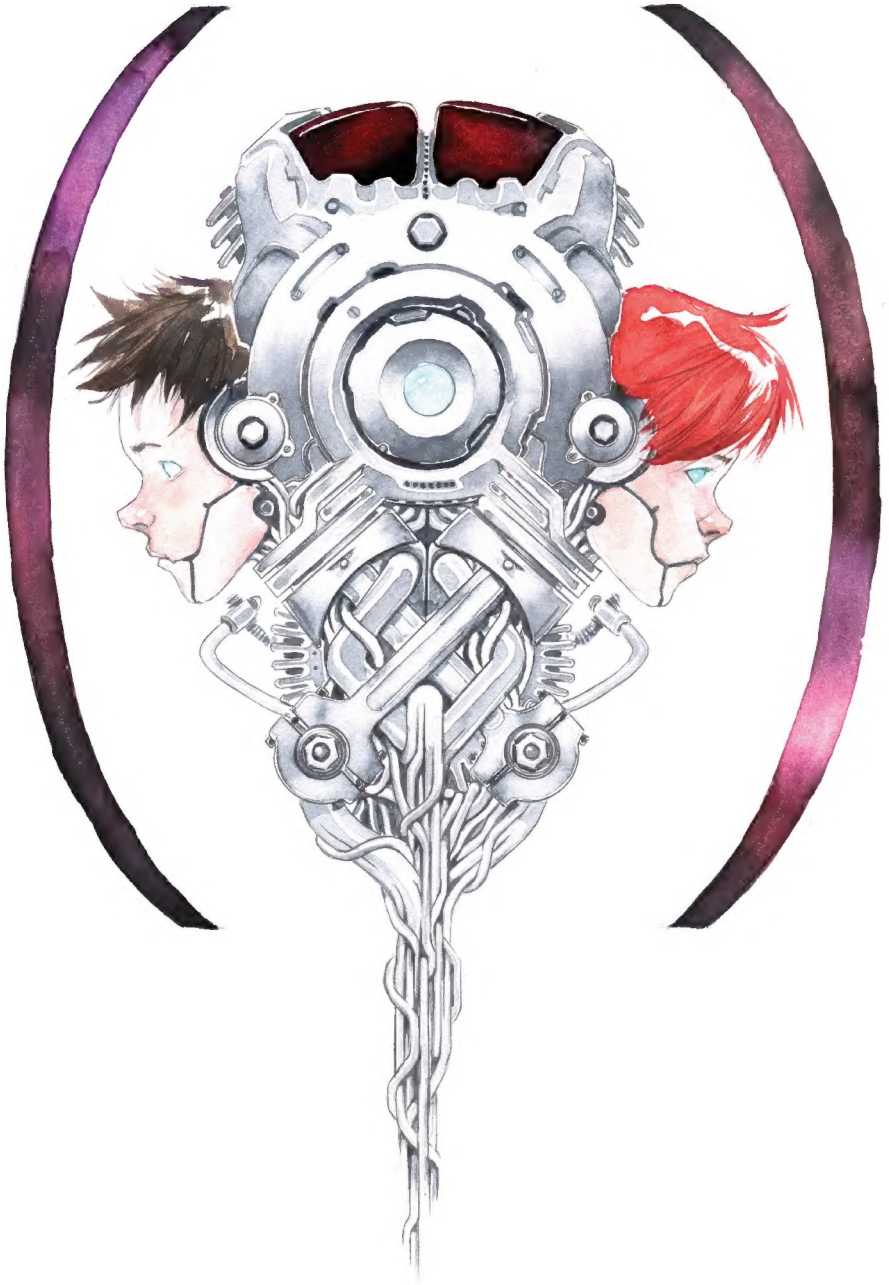


DESCENDER™

JEFF LEMIRE DUSTIN NGUYEN



ONE

DESCENDER

IMAGE COMICS Presents

DESCENDER

DELUXE EDITION VOLUME 1

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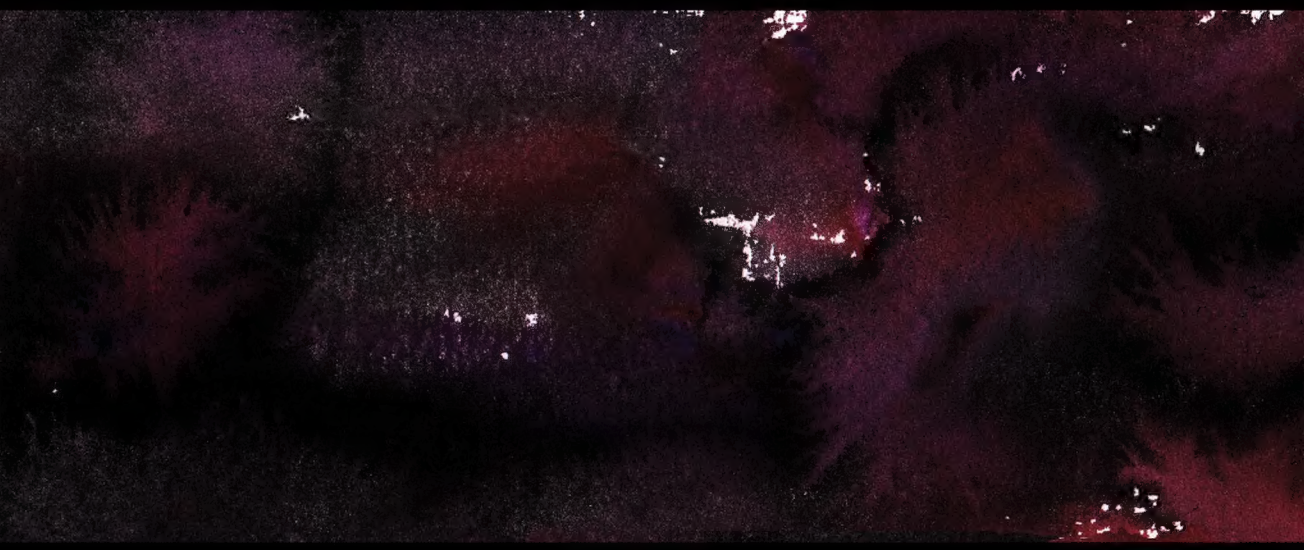

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ONE

THE PLANET NIYRATA.
Niyrata is the technological and cultural hub of the group of nine Core Planets known as The United Galactic Council.
Niyrata is also home to the nine Embassy Cities. One city state for each of the core planets and species representing the UGC.
Current population: 5.53 Billion

--I DON'T CARE WHAT THE GNISHIANS SAY, THAT COLONY BELONGS TO SAMPSON! ITS RESOURCES ARE OURS TO EXPLOIT AS WE SEE FIT! WE HAVE THE UGC'S BACKING HERE, DOCTOR TELLUN!
That's all well and fine to say--kzzt--but there--kzzt--!
--WHAAA!!!
Shhh-- it's all right, mommy is just on the com, dear... hush now.
--WHAAA!!!
--kzzt--
WHAAAA!!!
WOULD YOU QUIET HER DOWN! I'M--
I'M--
--But, Ma'am...
--Look. Above...
WHAT-- WHAT IS THAT?

--EEP! EEP!
--EEP! EEEP!
Excuse me Dr. Quon, but you have a Priority One hail from the United Galactic Council.
SHUT THAT DAMN ALARM OFF. WHAT TIME IS IT?
It is currently nine forty-six UGC time.

UGH. PROJECT THE COMM.
--QUON! WHERE THE HELL ARE YOU? WHY HAVEN'T YOU BEEN ANSWERING OUR HAILS?!
GENERAL NAGOKI. I'M SORRY, SIR! I WAS IN THE LAB ALL NIGHT AND--
I DON'T CARE! HAVEN'T YOU BEEN OUTSIDE?!
:SIGH: NO, WHAT NOW? ARE THE GNISHIANS BLOCKADING THE NIYRATIAN SPACEWAY AGAIN?
THIS IS NOT THE GNISHIANS!-- WE NEED YOU, DOCTOR. GET TO CENTRAL TERMINAL NOW!
OH!

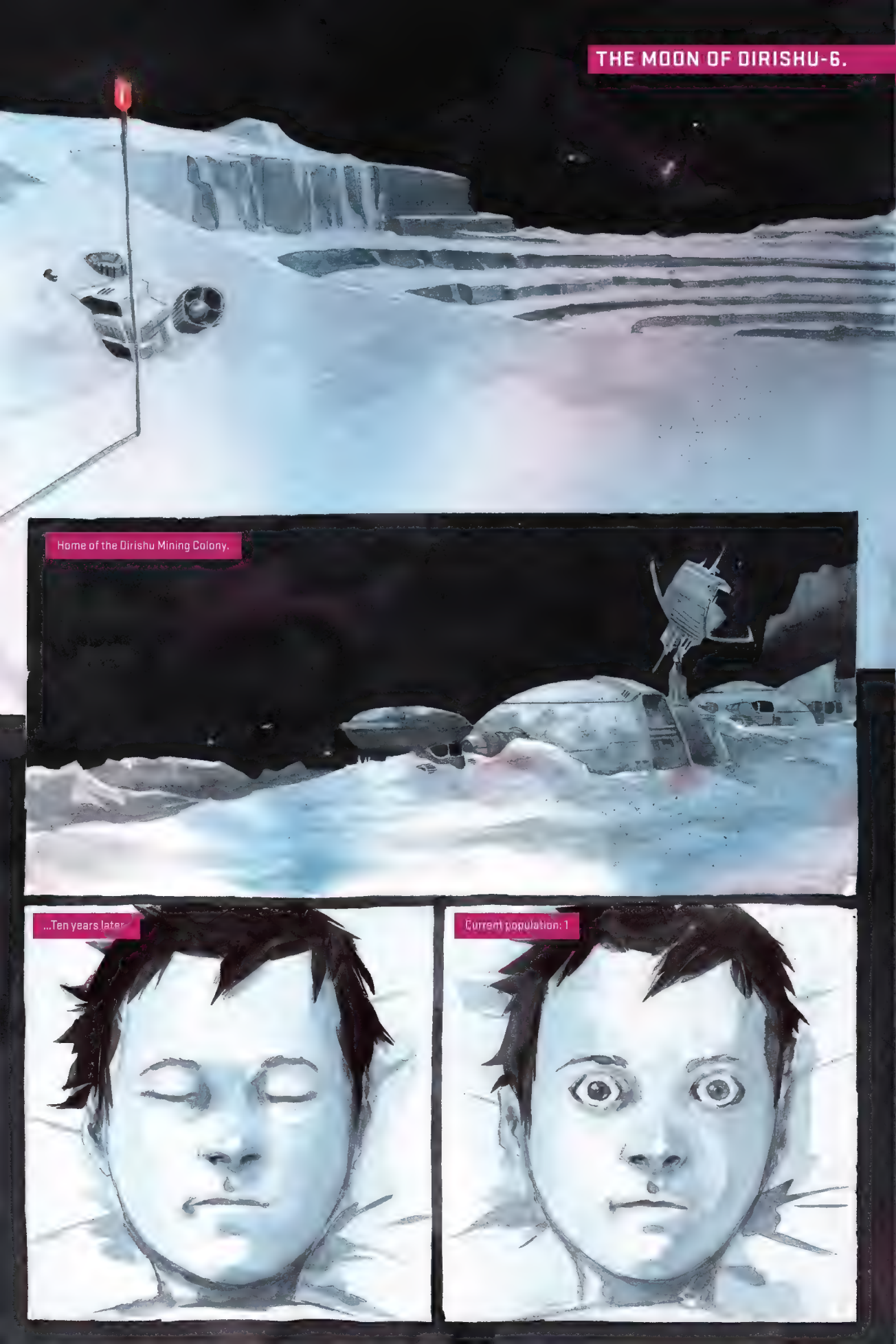
"--WHAT DO WE KNOW?"
"NOTHING, DOCTOR. OUR SENSORS HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO PENETRATE THEIR OUTER SHELLS."
--OUR COMMS ARE NOT BEING ANSWERED. IT SEEMS--WELL, IT SEEMS TOTALLY DORMANT.
THE COUNCIL IS IN A PANIC, THEY'VE SCRAMBLED ALL AVAILABLE UGC WARSHIPS AND ARE WAITING TO LAUNCH A FULL ASSAULT IF WE CAN'T FIGURE OUT WHAT THE HELL THESE THINGS ARE.
MY GOD!
GOD? I DON'T THINK SO, DOCTOR QUON...

...IT'S A MACHINE.

AND NOT JUST A MACHINE, QUON. THAT IS A ROBOT.
BUT I-- I DON'T-- YOU SAID THERE WERE OTHERS?
THERE ARE EIGHT MORE OF THESE THINGS, ORBITING THE OTHER EIGHT KEY WORLDS OF THE UGC. NOT IDENTICAL, BUT VERY SIMILAR IN SIZE AND SHAPE.
GENERAL NAGOKI, SURELY YOU MUST HAVE SOME IDEA WHERE THEY CAME FROM. MACHINES OF THIS SIZE--
YOU PRACTICALLY INVENTED MODERN ROBOTICS IN THE UGC, QUON!
THAT'S WHY YOU'RE HERE, THERE IS NO ONE MORE QUALIFIED TO FIGURE OUT WHAT THE HELL THESE THINGS ARE AND WHERE THEY CAME FROM THAN YOU.
I CAN GIVE YOU A TWENTY-FOUR HOUR WINDOW BEFORE WE LAUNCH A COMPLETE MILITARY ASSAULT.
THE UGC'S FULL RESOURCES ARE YOURS. JUST TELL ME WHAT YOU NEED AND IT'S YOURS.
I--
Blip
GENERAL, SOMETHING IS--
--HAPPENING.
ITS EYES!

THE ENERGY FIELD AROUND IT IS SPIKING, I THINK IT'S GOING TO COMMUNICATE!
NO!
IT'S AN ATTACK!
ARRRRRGH!

DESCENDER


THE MOON OF DIRISHU-6.
Home of the Dirishu Mining Colony.
...Ten years later.
Current population: 1

--HELLO?
SWIP
HELLO... ANDY? MOM?

!

SNIP

C--COMPUTER. ARE YOU ACTIVE?

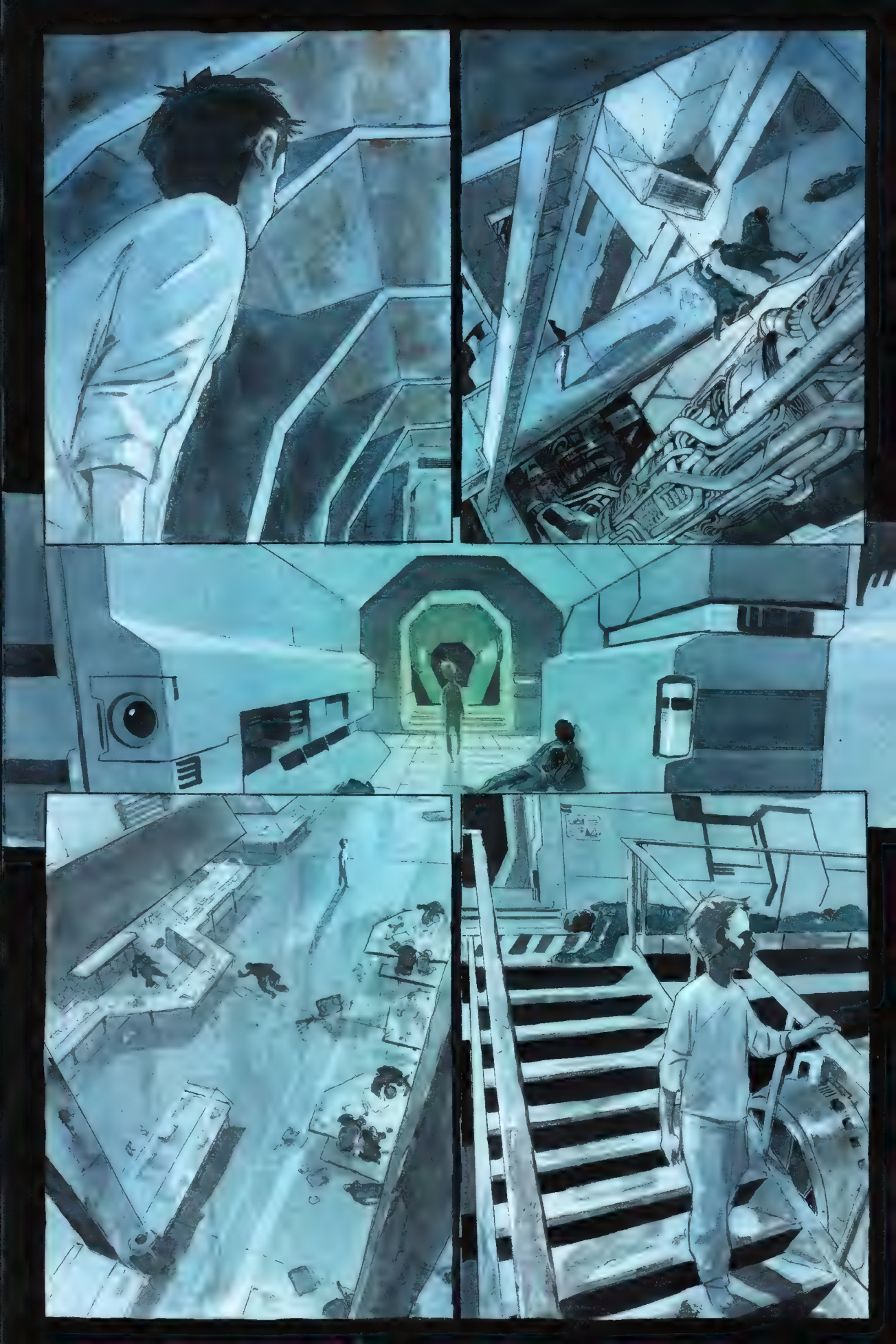
--kzzt--
Affirmative. Hello Tim-21.

HOW--HOW LONG HAVE I BEEN ASLEEP?

--You have been asleep for nearly ten years, Tim-21.

TEN YEARS?!

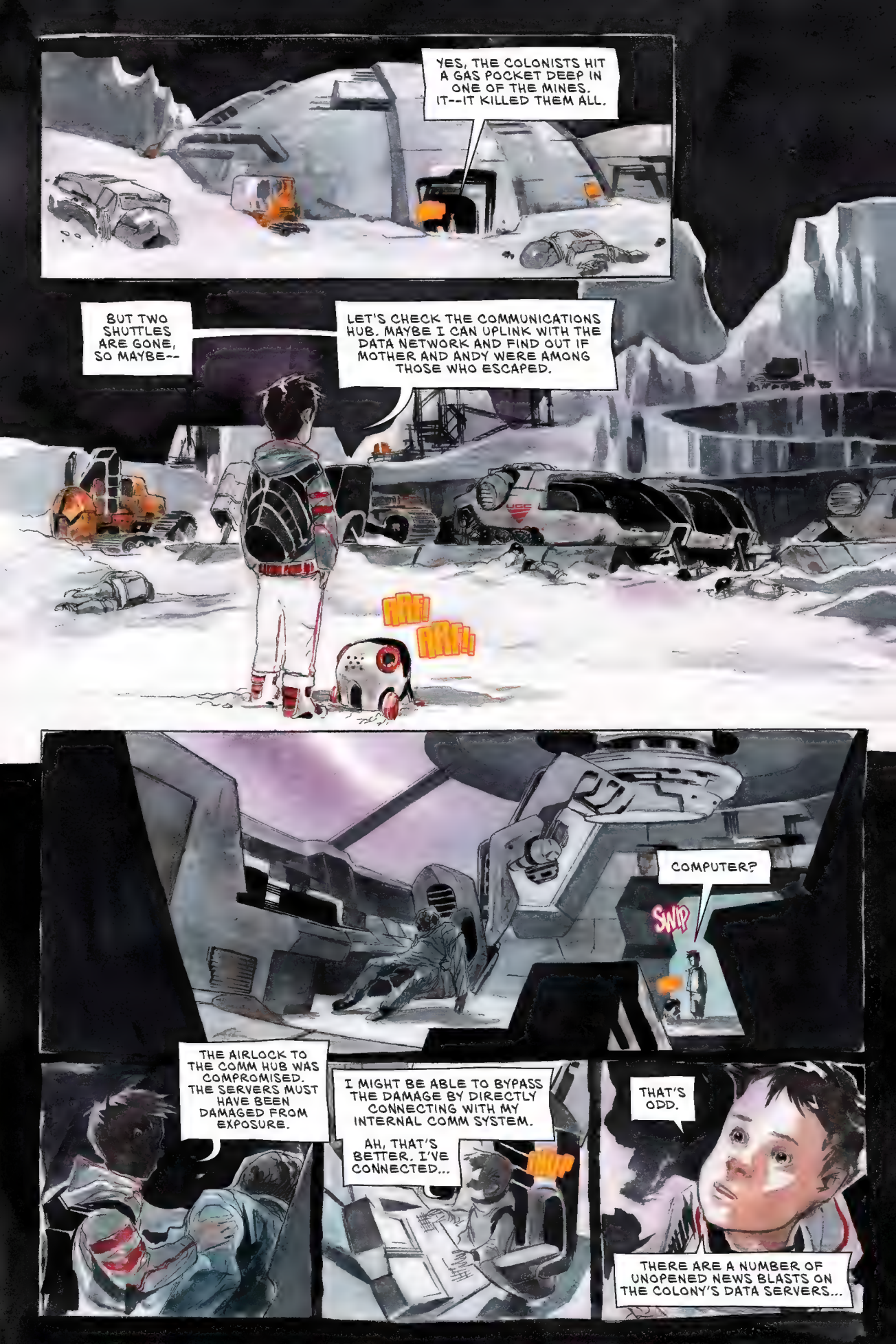
AND ANDY? ...MOTHER?
The humans you call "Andy" and "Mother" were among the--kzzt!
Kzzt--olonists hit an undetected pocket of Sirium Gas in the mines--kzzt-- corrupted the atmosphere --kzzt--within minutes. They tried to--kzzt!
FRA!
COMPUTER? WHAT WAS THAT?!
--kzzt--
COMPUTER, PLEASE ANSWER ME.
I-- I NEED HELP.



--HELLO?
FRA!
IS--IS SOMEONE THERE?
FRA!
!

CHAK
FRA!
BANDIT?!

I CAN'T BELIEVE IT'S REALLY YOU! WHY ARE YOU TALKING LIKE THAT?
YOUR LANGUAGE CIRCUITS ARE ALL MIXED UP--HERE...
BLEEP
BLEEP
--BACKWARDS. THERE, GOT IT.
AAA AAA
I DON'T KNOW WHERE ANDY IS...OR MOTHER.
WE'LL FIND THEM, BOY. I PROMISE.
ARF! ARF!
THE MOON OF DIRISHU-6.
YOU MUST HAVE BEEN SO LONELY. IT'S OKAY...I'M HERE NOW.
Current Population: 2


YES, THE COLONISTS HIT A GAS POCKET DEEP IN ONE OF THE MINES. IT--IT KILLED THEM ALL.
BUT TWO SHUTTLES ARE GONE, SO MAYBE--
LET'S CHECK THE COMMUNICATIONS HUB. MAYBE I CAN UPLINK WITH THE DATA NETWORK AND FIND OUT IF MOTHER AND ANDY WERE AMONG THOSE WHO ESCAPED.
ARF! ARF!!
COMPUTER?
SWIP
THE AIRLOCK TO THE COMM HUB WAS COMPROMISED. THE SERVERS MUST HAVE BEEN DAMAGED FROM EXPOSURE.
I MIGHT BE ABLE TO BYPASS THE DAMAGE BY DIRECTLY CONNECTING WITH MY INTERNAL COMM SYSTEM.
AH, THAT'S BETTER. I'VE CONNECTED...
THAT'S ODD.
THERE ARE A NUMBER OF UNOPENED NEWS BLASTS ON THE COLONY'S DATA SERVERS...

Nine of these massive machines have now been confirmed in orbit around the Core Worlds of the Magacosm. The United Galactic Council is stressing the need for calm. They assure us that they are investigating these mysterious--

--Now under attack! THE UGC is ordering a full evacuation and are mobilizing their worship in response!

--Niyrata is said to be on the verge of falling as well. The death toll is now in the hundreds of millions as these massive robots--or HARVESTERS as they are being called-- are seemingly unstoppable.

--Galactic unrest in the wake of the Harvester attacks. The UGC is crumbling as tensions, many centuries old, are now boiling over.

--Reports now that all nine Harvesters have simultaneously vanished. We have no way of telling if or when they may return.

The focus of THE HARVESTER attacks seems to have been citizens of the UGC and our planetary infrastructures, while our mechanical companions and helpers were mostly spared...

Fearing a link between our own robots and the Harvesters, anti-robot fanaticism is sweeping across the galaxy, resulting in widespread robot culls or a Robot Genocide as the spokesperson of the A.I. Embassy called it.

ARF! ARF!

THE PLANET NIYRATA.
Formerly the technological hub of the United Galactic Council.
Current population: Billions.
--EEP! EEP!
UNGH--
--EEP! EEEP!
--SIGH-- I'M COMING, GODAMMIT! HOLD ON!
DOCTOR JIN QUON? FORMER SCIENCE LIAISON TO THE UGC?
IF THIS IS ABOUT THAT JOB I DID FOR THOSE SCRAPPERS ON GNISH--I KNOW I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO OPERATE SINCE MY LICENSE WAS REVOKED, BUT I HAD A TEENSY GAMBLING DEBT THAT I HAD TO--
THE COUNCIL? ARE YOU LOST?
WE'RE NOT HERE TO ARREST YOU, DOCTOR. THE MEGACOSM NEEDS YOUR HELP...SO PUT SOME DAMN CLOTHES ON.

--PLEASE JUST A FEW CREDS SO I CAN GET SOME FOOD.
GET LOST.
UH-- CAPTAIN TESLA WAS IT?
TELSA.
TELSA, RIGHT. UM--WHERE EXACTLY ARE WE GOING, CAPTAIN?
TELL ME YOUR THEORY, DR. QUON. THE CODEX THEORY YOU PROPOSED TO THE UGC EMERGENCY COUNCIL FOLLOWING THE HARVESTER ATTACKS.
SOMETHING TELLS ME YOU ARE ALREADY WELL-VERSED IN MY HYPOTHESIS, CAPTAIN.
HUMOR ME.

HUMOR HER.
UH--WELL, AS YOU KNOW I WAS ON THE FRONT LINES WHEN THE HARVESTERS FIRST APPEARED, I COLLECTED AN INCREDIBLE AMOUNT OF DATA IN THOSE SECONDS BEFORE THEY ATTACKED.
THE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE HARVESTERS WAS FAR TOO COMPLEX--***TOO MASSIVE***--FOR ANYONE, ***EVEN ME*** TO COMPREHEND.
WE ARE TALKING ABOUT ROBOTICS ***SO ADVANCED*** THAT FOR US TO TRY AND UNDERSTAND IT WOULD BE LIKE AN APE TRYING TO--
SAVE ME THE METAPHORS AND FAST FORWARD TO THE CODEX STUFF.
WELL, DESPITE THE HARVESTERS' COMPLEXITY, ALL ROBOTS HAVE A BASE MACHINE CODEX--MUCH LIKE US WITH OUR DNA--A DIGITAL FINGERPRINT UNIQUE TO EVERY MODEL OF ROBOT.

RIGHT. AND YOU HYPOTHESIZED THAT IF WE COULD READ THE HARVESTERS' CODEX WE MIGHT GET A CLUE INTO THEIR ORIGINS OR EVEN WHO MAY HAVE CREATED THEM.
YOU SEEM TO KNOW EVERYTHING, CAPTAIN TESLA. SO WHY DO YOU NEED ME?
I TOLD YOU...IT'S TELSA.
EXCUSE ME, TELSA. SO TELSA...WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON HERE?
WELL, DOCTOR...THE CODEX HAS BEEN CRACKED.
WHAT?! WHEN?...BY WHOM? I SPENT YEARS WORKING ON THAT AND--
--AND YOU HAVEN'T DONE MUCH SINCE. BUT, UNLIKE YOU, OUR BEST EGGHEADS HAVEN'T FALLEN INTO A PIT OF SELF-LOATHING. THEY'VE KEPT TRYING.
NOW THE GOOD PART...BY CROSS-REFERENCING THE HARVESTERS' CODEX WITH ALL KNOWN A.I.S IN THE NETWORK, WE WERE ABLE TO FIND A MATCH TO AN EXISTING ROBOT MODEL.
...THE "TIM" ANDROID SERIES THAT YOU CREATED FIFTEEN YEARS AGO.
WHAT?! BUT THAT'S-- THE TIMS WERE JUST CHILD COMPANION BOTS!

IT WOULD APPEAR THEY ARE FAR MORE THAN THAT, QUON.
Y--YOU'RE SAYING MY TIM MODELS HAVE THE SAME CODEX AS THE HARVESTERS--BUT SURLY YOU CAN'T THINK I HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH--
WE DON'T KNOW WHAT WE THINK. WE THOUGHT ALL THE TIM MODELS WERE DESTROYED BY SCRAPPERS DURING THE EARLY DAYS OF THE ROBOT CULLS...
THAT WAS UNTIL A TIM-MODEL UPLINKED INTO THE OLD UGC SERVERS THREE DAYS AGO.
"A TIM, ALIVE!? WHERE?"
A DERELICT MINING COLONY ON THE OUTER RIM OF UGC SPACE. THAT'S WHERE WE'RE HEADED NOW...

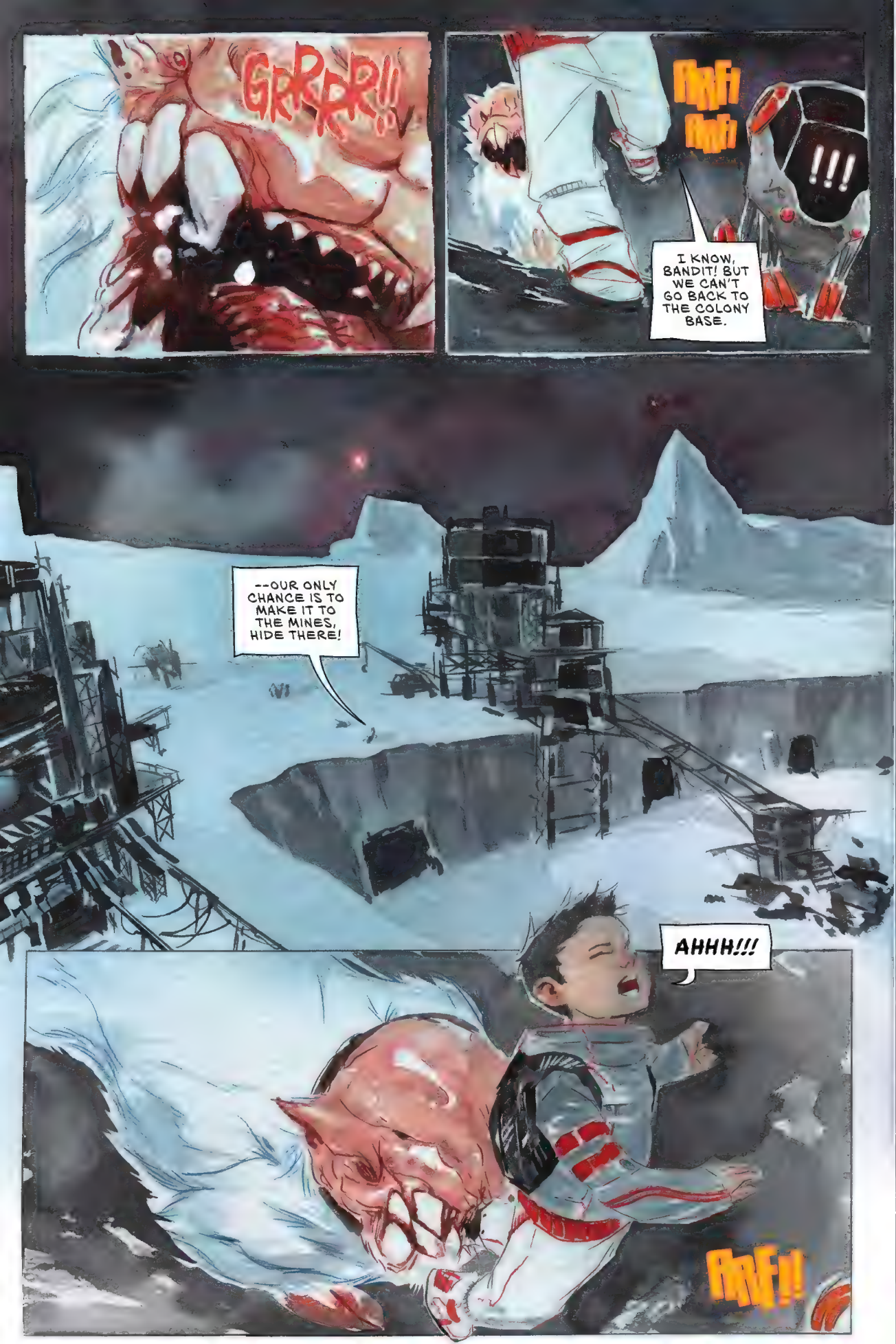
"...LET'S JUST HOPE WE GET THERE BEFORE SOMEONE ELSE DOES."
YOU WERE RIGHT BANDIT, IT IS A SHIP!
BEEP! BEEP!
I DON'T KNOW WHO IT IS, BANDIT! BUT SOMEONE MUST HAVE HEARD OUR DISTRESS CALL!
BEEP! BEEP!
I HOPE SO TOO, BANDIT. BUT DON'T WORRY. YOU DON'T NEED TO BE--
--SCARED.

I'D BE PLENTY SCARED IF I WAS YOU.
GRRRRRR

Critical System Failure. Initiating memory back-up protocols...
Opening sub-portal. Culling virtual memory banks—
Emergency back-up in progress...

RRFI RRFI
WELL, WELL...LOOKS LIKE WE GOT US A LIVE ONE, BOYS.
RUN, BANDIT, RUN!!
RRFI
DAMN IT! FAST!--MUST BE A NEWER MODEL.

HELLO? CAN YOU HEAR ME? ARE YOU THERE?
I--YES. I AM ACTIVE.
VERY GOOD. MY NAME IS DOCTOR JIN QUON. AND YOU ARE TIM-21. CAN YOU SAY THAT?
T--TIM-21. I AM TIM-21.
EXCELLENT!
DO YOU KNOW YOUR PRIMARY FUNCTION, TIM?
I AM A CLASS-A COMPANION ROBOT. MY PRIMARY FUNCTION IS TO ENTERTAIN, PROTECT AND ASSIST IN THE EDUCATION OF MY ASSIGNED HUMAN CHILD COMPANION.
SECONDARY FUNCTIONS INCLUDE USING MY PROPRIETARY EMPATHY SETTINGS TO ADAPT TO, AND GRADUALLY ASSIMILATE WITH, MY HUMAN COMPANIONS.
THAT'S EXACTLY RIGHT, TIM. ONCE YOUR ASSIGNMENT COMES IN YOU'LL TAKE A TRANSPORT TO ONE OF OUR MINING COLONIES AND MEET YOUR "FAMILY". ISN'T THAT EXCITING!
BUT...AREN'T YOU MY FAMILY? AREN'T YOU MY FATHER, DOCTOR JIN QUON?
HA! NO, TIM. I'M YOUR CREATOR AND DESIGNER. BUT THAT DOES NOT MAKE ME YOUR FAMILY. YOU HAVE NO REAL FAMILY. YOU AREN'T ALIVE. YOU DO UNDERSTAND THAT, DON'T YOU?
UPLOAD IN PROGRESS...1.3% UPLOADED...


GRRRR!!
RAWFI RAWFI
!!!
I KNOW, BANDIT! BUT WE CAN'T GO BACK TO THE COLONY BASE.
--OUR ONLY CHANCE IS TO MAKE IT TO THE MINES, HIDE THERE!
AHHH!!!
RAWF!!

ARE YOU READY FOR YOUR BIG TRIP, TIM?
I THINK SO, DR. QUON. HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?
WELL, THE DIRISHU-6 COLONY IS IN THE FURTHEST REACHES OF SPACE. NORMALLY WE WOULD USE A SHIFTSHIP TO JUMP THERE QUICKLY, BUT SINCE THIS IS MOSTLY A SUPPLY RUN YOU'LL BE TAKING A SNAILCRAFT WITH NORMAL FTL. IT WILL TAKE THREE MONTHS.
THE CREW WILL STAY IN CRYO-GELL UNTIL YOU REACH DIRISHU ORBIT.
WHY WON'T I GO INTO CRYOSLEEP, DOCTOR, QUON?
YOU'RE A ROBOT, TIM. THERE IS NO NEED FOR YOU TO SLEEP. I CAN DEACTIVATE YOU IF YOU'D LIKE. YOU CAN GO DARK UNTIL THE TRIP IS OVER.
BUT, I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT FIND YOUR FIRST SPACE FLIGHT INTERESTING.
YES...I THINK I'D LIKE TO STAY AWAKE. I'D LIKE TO SEE SPACE. BUT I'LL MISS YOU, DR. QUON.
I'LL MISS YOU TOO, TIM. BUT YOUR NEW FAMILY IS WAITING FOR YOU OUT THERE...YOUR NEW LIFE IS JUST BEGINNING!
UPLOAD IN PROGRESS... 11.87% UPLOADED...

BANDIT, NO! DON'T!
GRRRR
BANDIT!
GGRRR
STAY--STAY BACK!
SPLAT
LITTLE BOT HAS WICKED DEFENSE TECH, BOSS!
HOLD ON, BANDIT!

MOM! THERE HE IS!!
I SEE HIM! SLOW DOWN, ANDY.
HI! I'M ANDY!
HELLO, ANDY TAVERS. HELLO MS. TAVERS. I AM TIM-21.
P.Tavers
I KNOW THAT SILLY! WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU!
A.Tavers
COME ON, TIM! I'LL SHOW YOU OUR ROOM!
...OUR ROOM?

UPLOAD IN PROGRESS...17.44% UPLOADED...

BANDIT! YOU OKAY?
I KNOW, I'M SCARED TOO. BUT WE HAVE TO HIDE...
--THEY'RE COMING!
WHICH WAY?
I HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT!

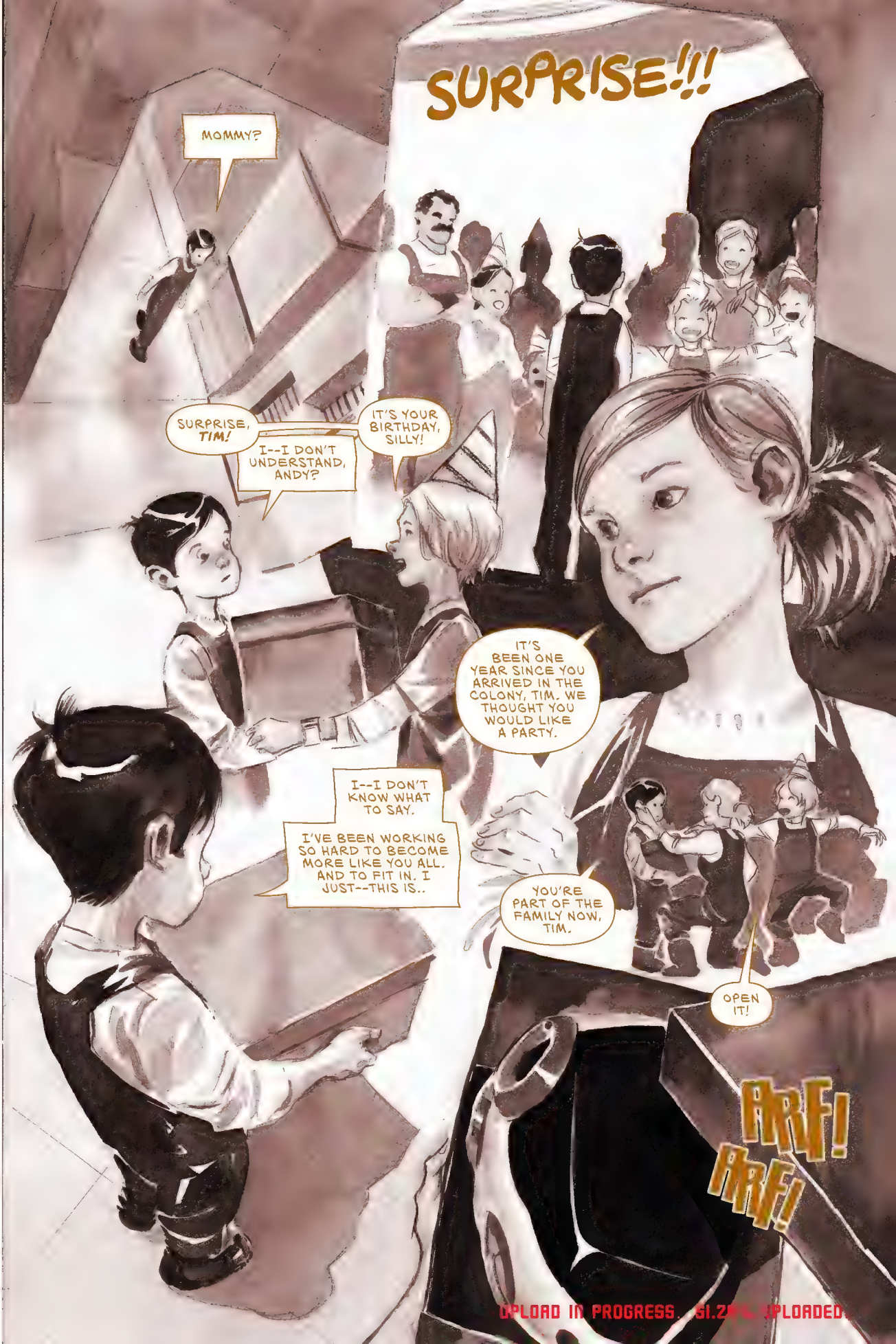
HAVE YOU READ THIS, TIM? IT'S MY FAVORITE BOOK, TRINKET TOCKET AND HIS TIN ROCKET!
I AM NOT FAMILIAR WITH IT, ANDY. BUT I CAN EASILY ACCESS THE DATA NETWORK AND DOWNLOAD ALL THE VOLUMES IF YOU'D LIKE?
NAH. MY MOM STILL GETS THEM FOR ME IN HARD COPY. I LOVE READING THEM LIKE THIS. THE DRAWINGS LOOK BETTER.
AND HOW ARE YOU TWO MAKING OUT IN HERE?
GOOD!
VERY WELL, THANK YOU, MS. TAVERS.
Trinket Tocket And His Tin Rocket
WELL, I THINK IT'S YOUR BED TIME, ANDY. CAN YOU SAY GOOD NIGHT TO *TIM*, NOW?
BUT MOM, CAN'T *TIM* SLEEP IN HERE WITH ME? PLEASE, MOMMY?!
WELL, I GUESS IT'S OKAY. HOW ABOUT IT, TIM? WOULD YOU LIKE TO SLEEP HERE WITH ANDY TONIGHT?
I--I WOULD LIKE THAT VERY MUCH, MS. TAVERS!

UPLOAD IN PROGRESS...23.82% UPLOADED...

WHICH WAY, BOSS? SHOULD WE SPLIT UP?
YOU KIDDING ME? YOU IDIOTS'LL GET LOST IN THERE. WE STICK TOGETHER. THEY WENT IN THE LEFT TUNNEL.
YOU SURE.
'COURSE I'M SURE!
BOSS, WE GOT A PROBLEM. SCANNERS ARE PICKING UP A PRIORITY ONE ALERT FOR THIS BOT FROM THE OLD PLANETARY NETWORK CHANNELS.
HE'S HANDS-OFF AND THEY GOT A UGC SHIFTSHIP ON ROUTE TO PICK HIM UP.
HOW THE HELL IS THAT A PROBLEM?
WHEN DID WE START TAKING ORDERS FROM THE UGC? GNISHIANS'LL PAY TRIPLE FOR HIS PROCESSOR NOW.
"WE JUST HIT THE JACK-BOT, BOYS!"

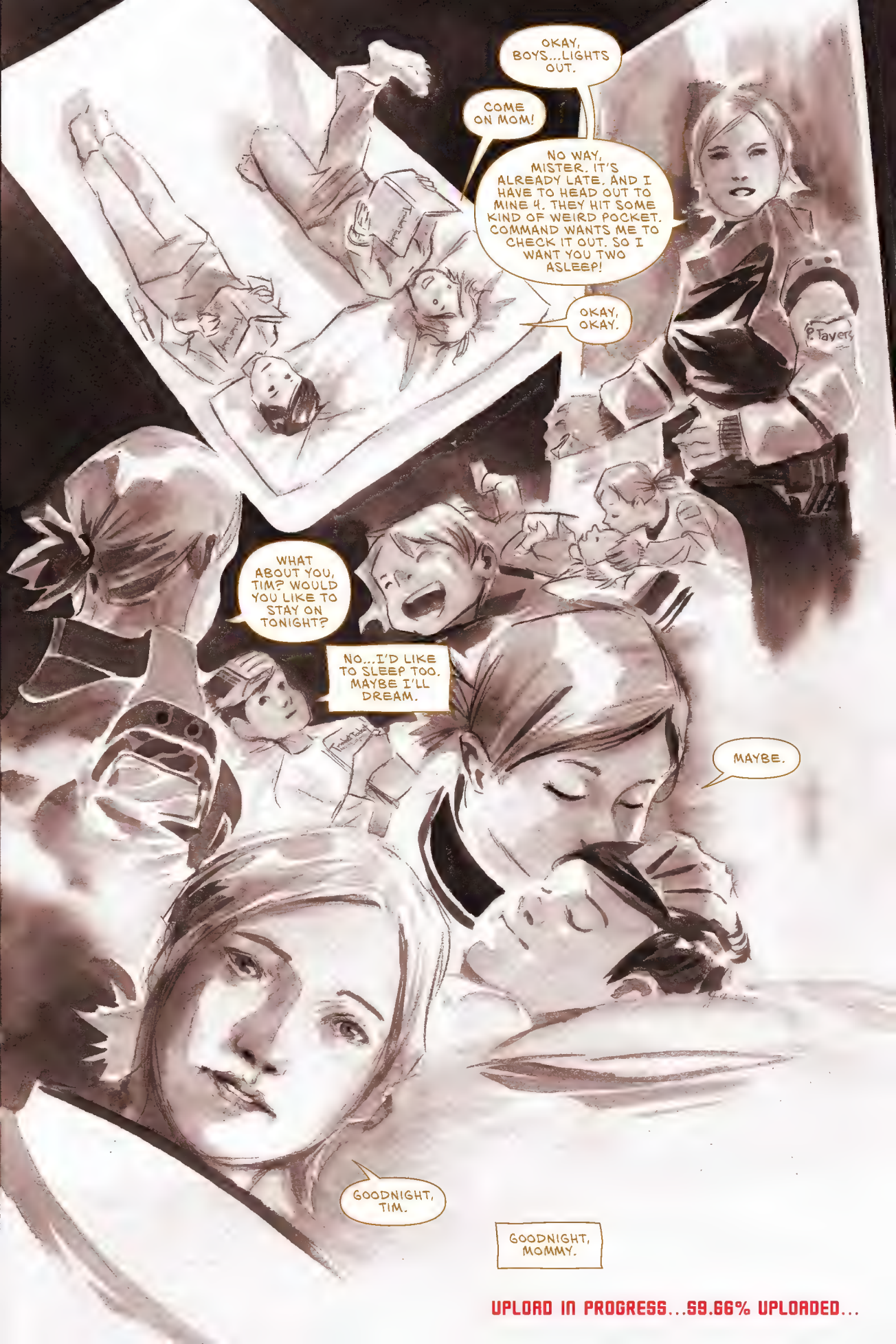
HERE IT COMES!
UNGH-- TOO HIGH, TIM!
HANG ON, I'LL GET IT!
ANDY, LOOK OUT!
HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I TOLD YOU NOT TO PLAY NEAR THE TRANSPATH!
SORRY MOM.
IT'S--IT'S OKAY. THANK GOD TIM WAS HERE.
OH MY GOD! ANDY!
THANK YOU, TIM. THANK YOU!

THIS WAY!
OH!
M-MOMMY?!
Tavers


SURPRISE!!!
MOMMY?
SURPRISE, TIM!
IT'S YOUR BIRTHDAY, SILLY!
I--I DON'T UNDERSTAND, ANDY?
IT'S BEEN ONE YEAR SINCE YOU ARRIVED IN THE COLONY, TIM. WE THOUGHT YOU WOULD LIKE A PARTY.
I--I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY.
I'VE BEEN WORKING SO HARD TO BECOME MORE LIKE YOU ALL. AND TO FIT IN. I JUST--THIS IS..
YOU'RE PART OF THE FAMILY NOW, TIM.
OPEN IT!
ARF! ARF!

UPLOAD IN PROGRESS... 61.2% UPLOADED

T--THEY'RE COMING?
WHY ARE THEY DOING THIS?! WHY WON'T THEY LEAVE US ALONE!!
MY PLASMA BOLT ISN'T RECHARGED YET, BANDIT...
I--I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO!


OKAY, BOYS...LIGHTS OUT.
COME ON MOM!
NO WAY, MISTER. IT'S ALREADY LATE. AND I HAVE TO HEAD OUT TO MINE 4. THEY HIT SOME KIND OF WEIRD POCKET. COMMAND WANTS ME TO CHECK IT OUT. SO I WANT YOU TWO ASLEEP!
OKAY, OKAY.
P. Tayers
WHAT ABOUT YOU, TIM? WOULD YOU LIKE TO STAY ON TONIGHT?
NO...I'D LIKE TO SLEEP TOO. MAYBE I'LL DREAM.
MAYBE.
GOODNIGHT, TIM.
GOODNIGHT, MOMMY.

UPLOAD IN PROGRESS...59.66% UPLOADED...

NOW, THERE YOU ARE. YOU GAVE US QUITE RUN THERE LITTLE ROBBIE.
THESE PET-BOTS WORTH ANYTHING?
MAYBE FIVE CREDS IF WE'RE LUCKY.
BUT YOU... YOU'RE A DAMN GOLDMINE, KID.
Bleep!--Plasma Recharge complete.
SHRACK
SON OF A BITCH!
!
POOM
-KZZT

Critical System Failure. Initiating memory back-up process...
Opening sub-portal. Culling virtual memory banks—
Emergency back-up in progress...

HE KILLED THE BOSS.
WHO CARES? MORE CREDS FOR US ONCE WE PULL THIS ONE'S PROCESSOR OUT.
HEH HEH...I LIKE THE WAY YOU THINK.
BLEEP-HRRRMMM··· HRRRMANSSS····
?
WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT?
UPLOAD IN PROGRESS... 11.87% UPLOADED...
DRILLER HATE HRRMANS!!
OH SHIT!
CHK-CHAK
UPLOAD IN PROGRESS... 17.44% UPLOADED...

DRILLER REALLY REALLY HATE HRRMANS!!
ARRRGHH!
VRRRRRR
UPLOAD IN PROGRESS...23.06% UPLOADED...
DRILLER A KILLER!
POOM POOM
UNGH--
DRILLER A REAL KILLER!!
UPLOAD IN PROGRESS...51.28% UPLOADED...
LITTLE BOTS?
UPLOAD IN PROGRESS...59.66% UPLOADED
LITTLE BOT BROKEN?

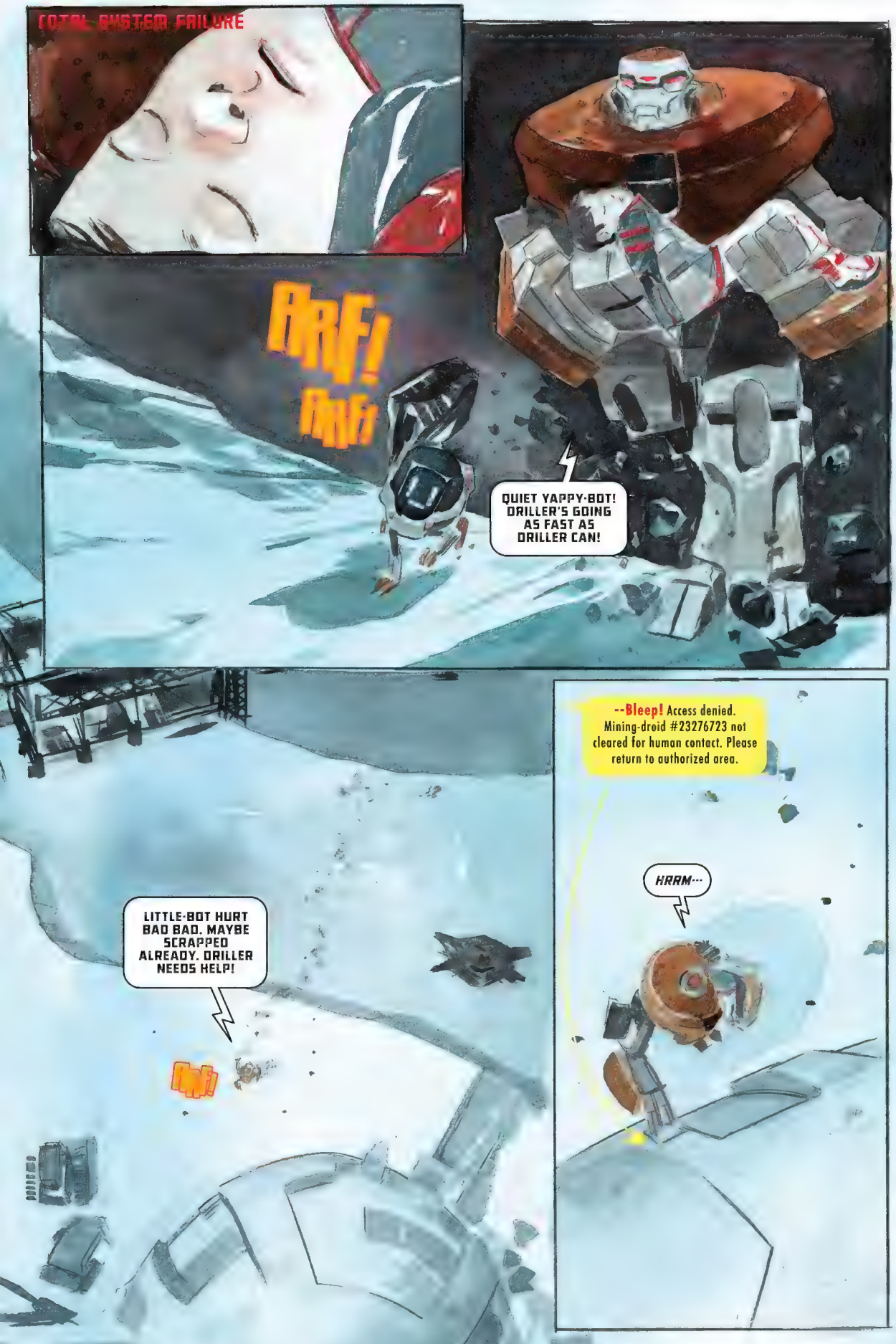
DRILLER DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO, LITTLE BOT. DRILLER DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO...
TIM-21 TOTAL SYSTEM FAILURE.
TIM-21 TOTAL SYSTEM FAILURE.
TIM-21 TOTAL SYSTEM FAILURE.
TIM-21 TOTAL SYSTEM FAILURE
ARF!
ARF!

THREE

TOTAL SYSTEM FAILURE
TOTAL SYSTEM F—
BANDIT?
Hello, TIM-21.
WHAT-?!

I have been waiting for you.

WHO ARE YOU?
I was ERAZ-435.
WAS?
Was. I have been destroyed. Just like you.
BUT--I'M NOT--
WHERE ARE WE?
We are home. This is where we all go.
I was sent to wait for you. Now we can go. Come.
WAIT!
ERAZ-435?


TOTAL SYSTEM FAILURE
BRRF!
RRRF!
QUIET YAPPY-BOT! DRILLER'S GOING AS FAST AS DRILLER CAN!
--Bleep! Access denied. Mining-droid #23276723 not cleared for human contact. Please return to authorized area.
HRRM···
LITTLE-BOT HURT BAD BAD. MAYBE SCRAPPED ALREADY. DRILLER NEEDS HELP!

ARRGH!
I TOLD YA, DRILLER DON'T SPEAK DOG-BOT!
SHUSH IT! DRILLER AIN'T TOO SMART-- GOTTA THINK!
WHIRRR
DRILLER AIN'T NO MED-BOT! DRILLER TOO DUMB TO FIGURE OUT WHY THEY AIN'T WORKING! LITTLE BOT'S GONNA SPARK OFF AND STUPID DRILLER TOO STUPID TO FIX HIM!
--Kzzt--Proximity alert. Unknown spacecraft detected in Colony orbit.
ARF!
HRRRM...

TWOOP
"--NOW EXITING SHIFTSPACE, CAPTAIN."
THANK YOU, MR. TULLIS. OPEN A HAIL TO THE DIRISHU COLONY. I DON'T EXPECT AN ANSWER, BUT YOU NEVER KNOW.
YOU SAID THE COLONY WAS DERELICT, TELSA. WHAT HAPPENED HERE?
NOT TOTALLY SURE, QUON.
SOMETHING TO DO WITH A FATAL GAS LEAK. THE COLONY WENT DARK DURING THE HARVESTER ATTACKS.

DIDN'T THE UGC SEND ANYONE TO INVESTIGATE?
NOT SURE IF YOU NOTICED, DOC...BUT THE COUNCIL HAS ITS HANDS A BIT FULL. WHAT WITH THE MEGACOSM FALLING TO PIECES AND ALL.
DON'T PATRONIZE ME, CAPTAIN TELSA.
YES OF COURSE. AFTER ALL, NO ONE KNOWS MORE ABOUT ***THE FALL*** OF THE UGC THAN YOU, QUON...THE FATHER OF ROBOTICS. IT MUST HAVE BEEN HARD TO SEE YOUR LIFE'S WORK WIPED AWAY.
THE ROBOT CULLS WERE BARBARIC. I STOOD AGAINST THEM. BUT THAT DOESN'T MAKE ***ME*** THE ENEMY, TELSA.
ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THAT?
WHAT IS THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?
THE TIM SERIES...YOUR GREAT ACHIEVEMENT. IF THIS BOY IS LINKED TO THE HARVESTERS... THAT WOULD MAKE ***YOU*** LINKED TO THE HARVESTERS, QUON.
WHA--?! I-I WAS CLEARED OF ALL CHARGES YEARS AGO! YOU SAID YOURSELF I WASN'T A SUSPECT. I'M HERE TO ***HELP!***

OF COURSE YOU ARE, DOCTOR. AND YOU'RE RIGHT, YOU'RE NOT OUR PRISONER...NOT YET ANYWAY.
WHAT ARE YOU SMILING AT, QUON?
WHO ARE YOU, CAPTAIN TELSA?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
I MEAN, WHY WERE YOU SELECTED FOR THIS MISSION? IT'S TOO IMPORTANT TO TRUST WITH JUST ANY UGC THUG.
THAT'S NONE OF YOUR--
CAPTAIN! WE GOT SOME BAD NEWS!
WHAT IS IT, TULLIS?
ANOTHER SHIP'S ION SIGNATURE IS STILL PRESENT IN ORBIT. SOMEONE BEAT US HERE...
SCRAPPERS! HAS TO BE. GNISHYS MUST HAVE PICKED UP THE TIM-BOT'S SIGNAL TOO.
OPEN THE SHIP ARMORY AND PREPARE FOR LANDING, MR. TULLIS.
AYE, CAPTAIN.
YOU WANT TO SEE ME PLAY AT BEING A THUG, QUON? WELL, YOU'RE ABOUT TO GET YOUR CHANCE.

HELLO? ERAZ?
Oh. I wondered where that had gone to.
WHERE DOES THIS TUNNEL LEAD? WHO ARE YOU? HOW DID YOU GET HERE?
So many questions. Unfortunately, we do not have time for all of them, TIM-21.

HOW DID YOU GET HERE?
I was a kitchen droid on the planet Sampson. Seven months after the attacks by the machines now known as The Harvesters, I was pulled out into the city square by Scrappers, along with hundreds of other robots.
SCRAPPERS? WERE--WERE THEY THE ONES WHO HURT ME?
Yes.
They made sport of us, systematically torturing and destroying us as our former masters and companions cheered them on.
BUT...WHY?
Because they fear us, TIM-21.
Because they were hurt and they wanted to hurt something back.
Because they are human.
AND THIS PLACE?
You will see. Please, follow.
WAIT!

KT-SHHHHH
NO LIFE READINGS, CAPTAIN.
THE SCRAPPERS HAVE JAMMED OUR SCANNERS BEFORE. BE READY FOR ANYTHING.
STAY IN THE SHIP, DOCTOR.
I'M NOT A CHILD, TELSA. I CAN HANDLE MYSELF.
I'M SURE THERE'S NOTHING TO BE AF--
RRF!

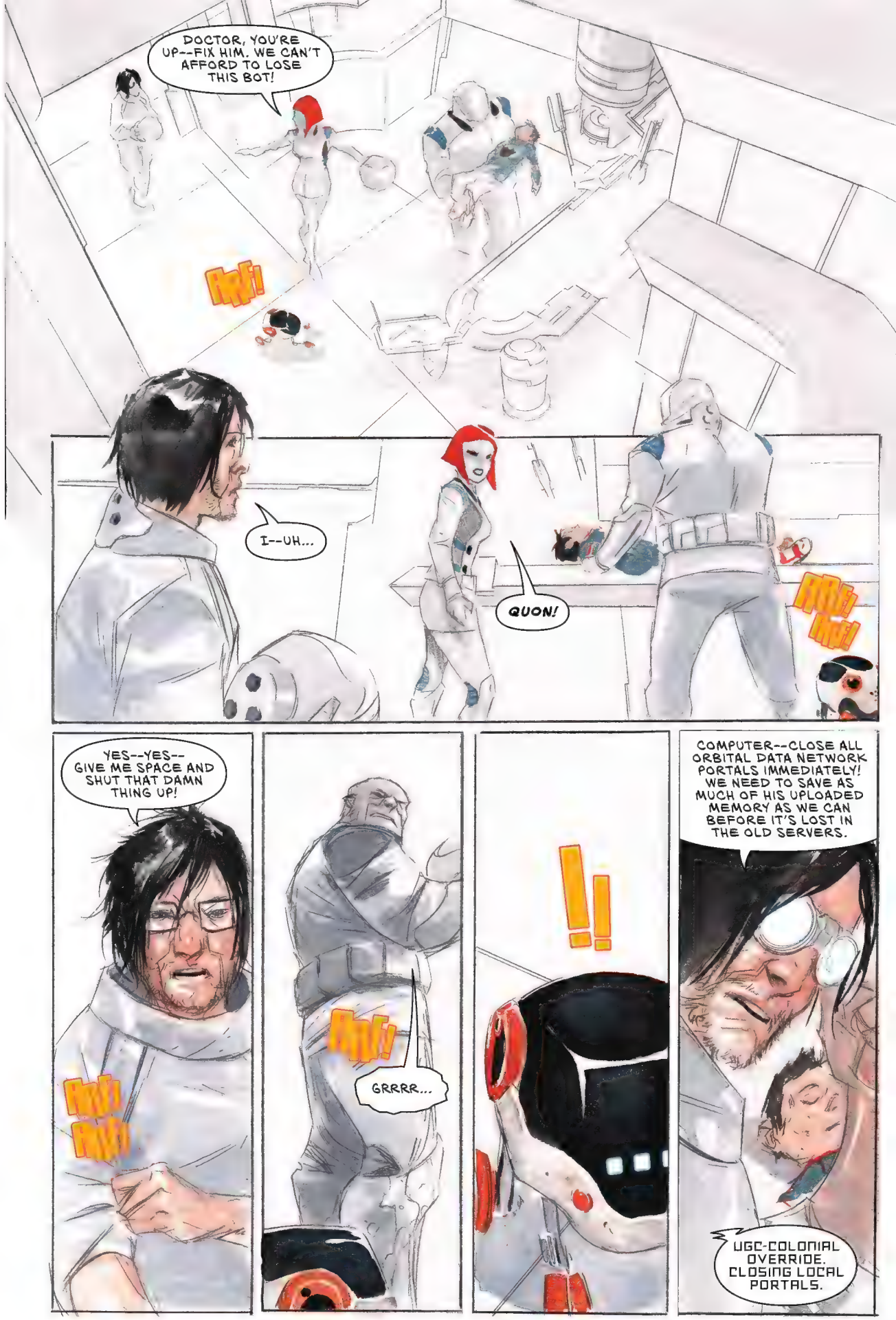
HURRRRMANS!!
SHIT.
VWIPWWP
YOU WANNA KILL ME, HUMES?! DRILLER A KILLER! DRILLER A REAL KILLER!

TULLIS!
...I HAVE THIS, CAPTAIN.
WHAM
--UNGH!
GOT NOTHING HUME. DRILLER GOT YOU!
NO... YOU DON'T.

CHK
KZZZZZT
HRRRM!!
IS HE--?
EMP BURSTER. LOW LEVEL. IT'LL BE OUT FOR A WHILE, BUT STILL FUNCTIONAL IF WE REBOOT HIM.
QUON?
HERE! HURRY!

HE-- HE'S...
AHF!
E-ERAZ-435?
THE EQUIPMENT HERE IS DEAD. GET HIM TO THE SHIP!
OH!

...Join us. Time-et... We are the discarded and destroyed. We are The Harvested.

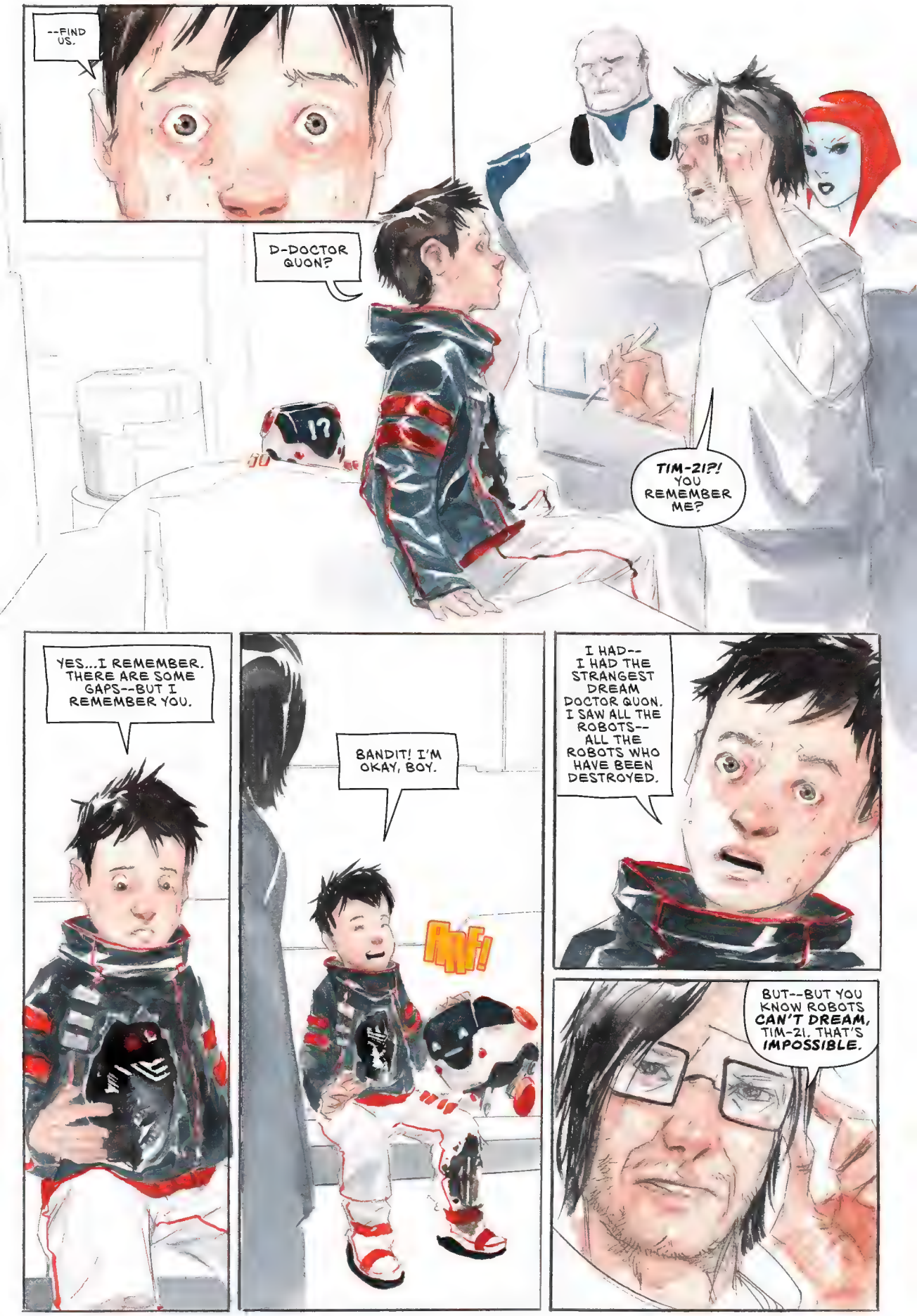

DOCTOR, YOU'RE UP--FIX HIM. WE CAN'T AFFORD TO LOSE THIS BOT!
ARF!
I--UH...
QUON!
ARF! ARF!
YES--YES--GIVE ME SPACE AND SHUT THAT DAMN THING UP!
ARF! ARF!
ARF!
GRRRR...
!!
COMPUTER--CLOSE ALL ORBITAL DATA NETWORK PORTALS IMMEDIATELY! WE NEED TO SAVE AS MUCH OF HIS UPLOADED MEMORY AS WE CAN BEFORE IT'S LOST IN THE OLD SERVERS.
UGC-COLONIAL OVERRIDE. CLOSING LOCAL PORTALS.

I--I THINK I CAN MEND MOST OF THE HARDWARE AT LEAST ENOUGH TO GET HIM OPERATIONAL...

Please TIM-21-don't leave us--

Please TIM-21-please only you can free us

QUON?!
--GUTS ARE A MESS. I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH DAMAGE HAS ALREADY BEEN DONE TO HIS NEURAL PATHWAYS.
JUST FIX HIM, DOCTOR!
I'M TRYING!!
NO!!
COME ON...
RETRIEVING RECENT DATA PURGE...
NO!
Find us!


--FIND US.
D-DOCTOR QUON?
TIM-21?! YOU REMEMBER ME?
YES...I REMEMBER. THERE ARE SOME GAPS--BUT I REMEMBER YOU.
BANDIT! I'M OKAY, BOY.
ARF!
I HAD-- I HAD THE STRANGEST DREAM DOCTOR QUON. I SAW ALL THE ROBOTS-- ALL THE ROBOTS WHO HAVE BEEN DESTROYED.
BUT--BUT YOU KNOW ROBOTS CAN'T DREAM, TIM-21. THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE.

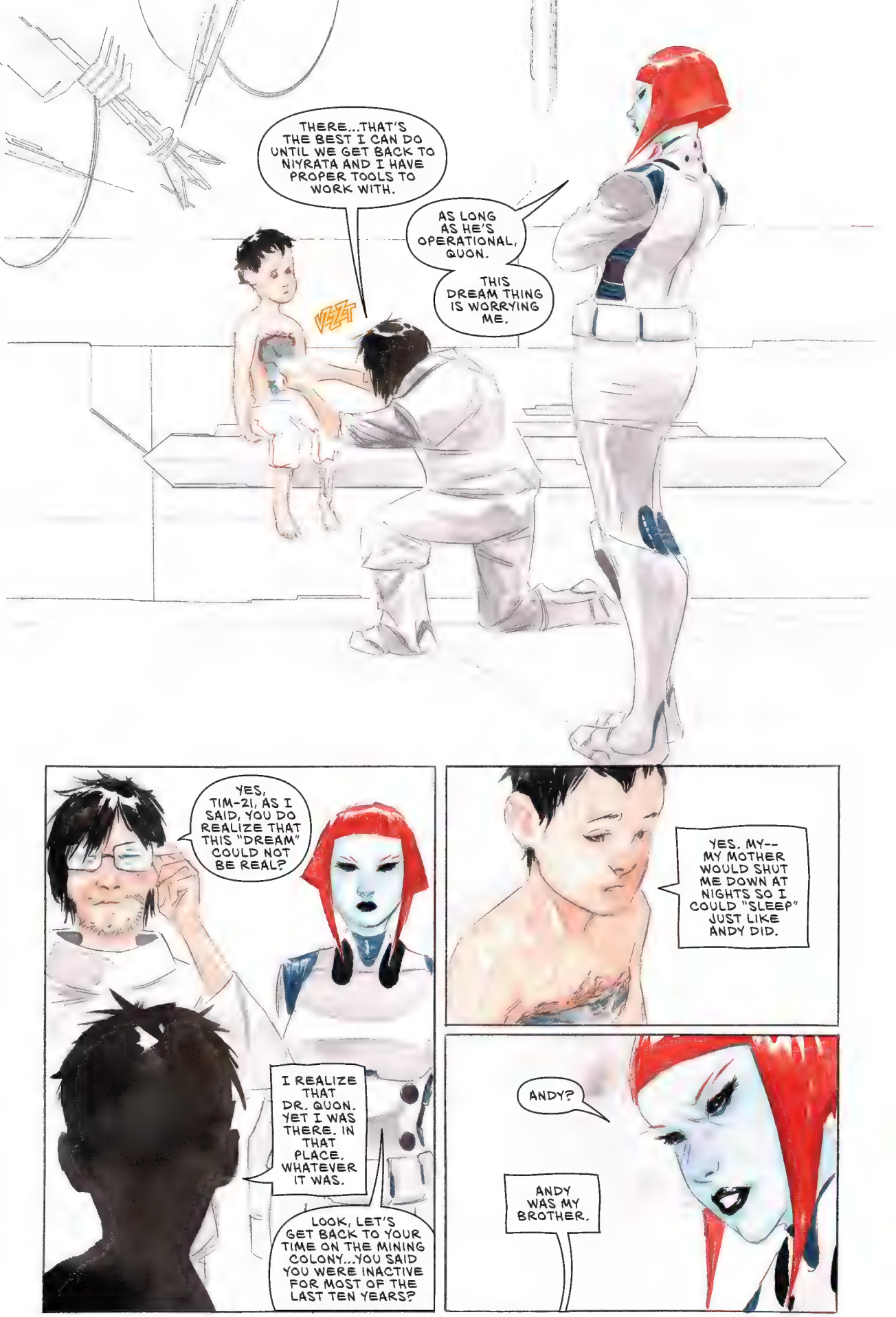
BUT IF IT WASN'T A DREAM-- THEN--WHERE WAS I?

SKZZZ

--I DON'T REMEMBER DYING. I--I JUST REMEMBER WAKING UP IN THAT PLACE. IT WAS A BIG PLACE...AND I WAS ALL ALONE.

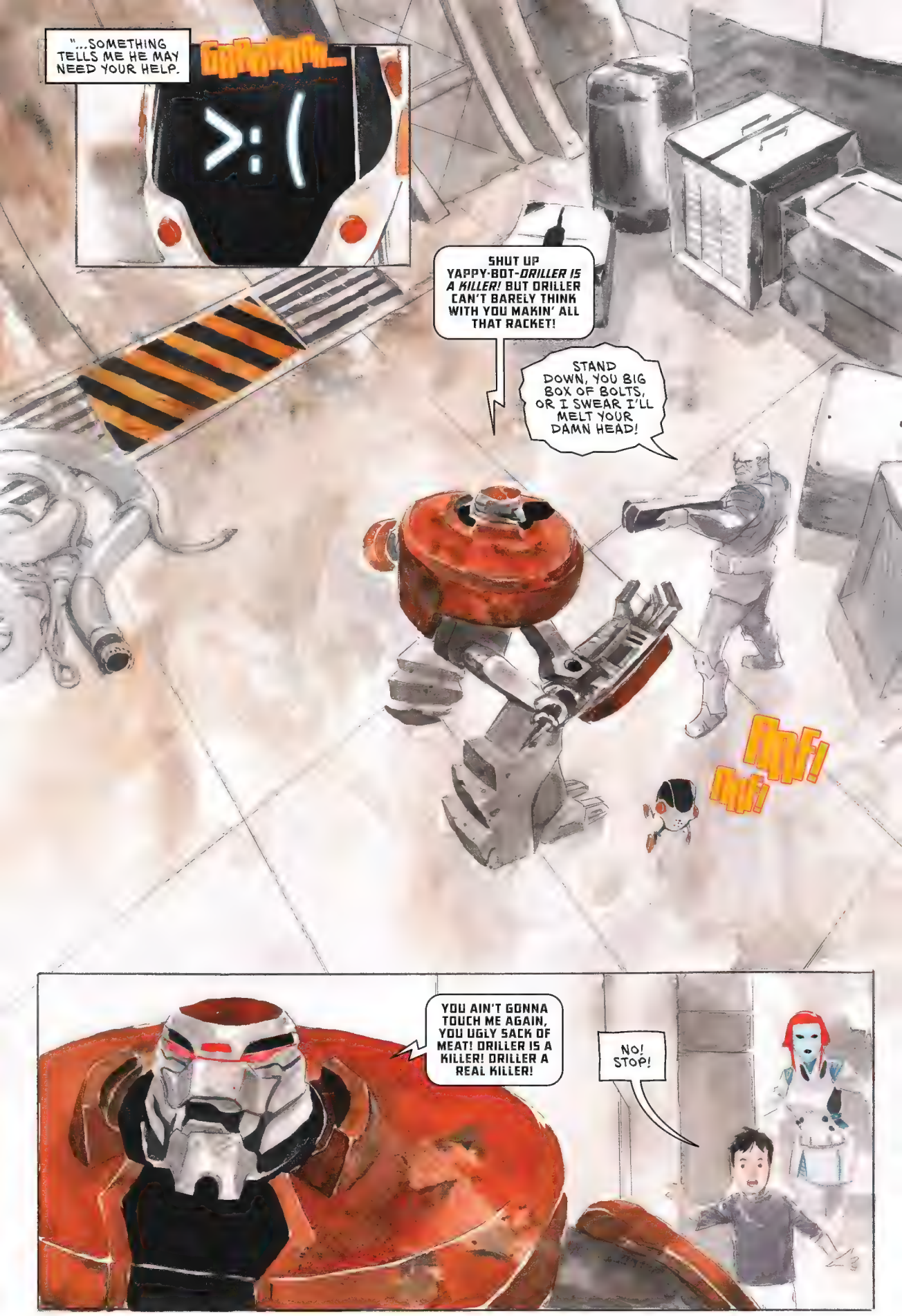
AND THEN I WASN'T ALONE. THERE WAS ANOTHER LITTLE BOT THERE. AND HE WAS HURT AND HE TOLD ME SOME BAD THINGS.
VIZZZT

HOLD STILL, TIM-21. I'M ALMOST DONE.
OH...I'M SORRY, DOCTOR QUON.


THERE...THAT'S THE BEST I CAN DO UNTIL WE GET BACK TO NIYRATA AND I HAVE PROPER TOOLS TO WORK WITH.
AS LONG AS HE'S OPERATIONAL, QUON.
THIS DREAM THING IS WORRYING ME.
VZZT
YES, TIM-21, AS I SAID, YOU DO REALIZE THAT THIS "DREAM" COULD NOT BE REAL?
I REALIZE THAT DR. QUON. YET I WAS THERE. IN THAT PLACE. WHATEVER IT WAS.
LOOK, LET'S GET BACK TO YOUR TIME ON THE MINING COLONY...YOU SAID YOU WERE INACTIVE FOR MOST OF THE LAST TEN YEARS?
YES. MY-- MY MOTHER WOULD SHUT ME DOWN AT NIGHTS SO I COULD "SLEEP" JUST LIKE ANDY DID.
ANDY?
ANDY WAS MY BROTHER.

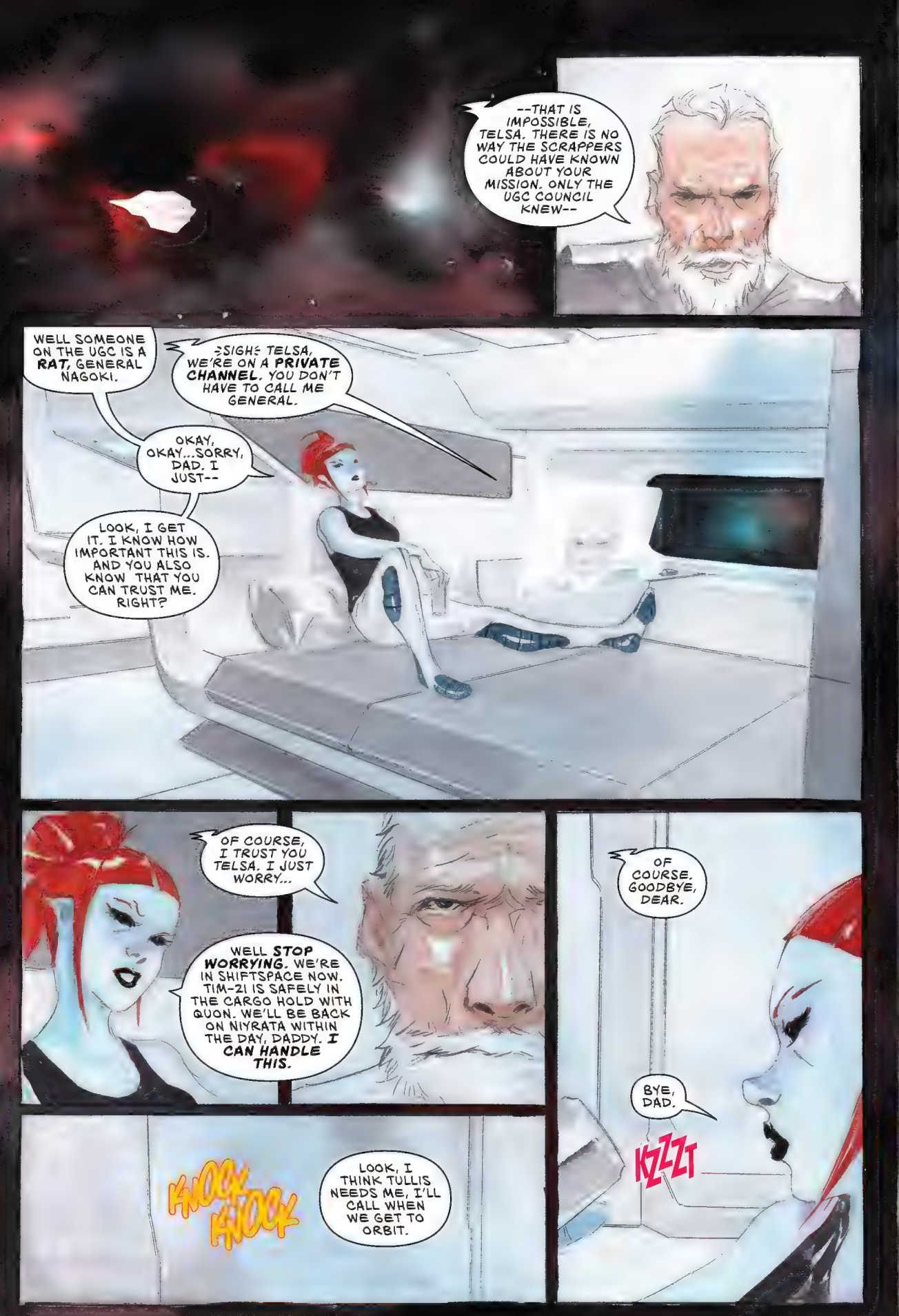
AND YOUR--YOUR MOTHER, TIM-21. SHE WAS A MINER?
I KNOW SHE WAS NOT ***REALLY*** MY MOTHER, DR. QUON. SHE WAS THE MOTHER OF ANDY. THE BOY I WAS ASSIGNED TO KEEP COMPANY. BUT THEY--
SHE WAS ONE OF THE MINERS, YES. I-- I FOUND HER WHEN THOSE BAD MEN, THE SCRAPPERS, CAME. SHE WAS--SHE WAS DEAD.
BUT DOCTOR, I DID NOT SEE ANDY THERE. A FEW SHUTTLES WERE MISSING. COULD HE HAVE GOTTEN AWAY?
TIM, THE UGC CAN HELP YOU LOOK FOR YOUR--FOR ANDY. IF HE SURVIVED WE CAN FIND HIM.
YOU KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENED IN THE GALAXY SINCE YOU WERE ASLEEP? ABOUT THE HARVESTERS...
YES...WHEN I ACCESSED THE COMPUTERS I SAW IT ALL.

WELL, TIM, WE THINK YOU MAY BE ***VERY SPECIAL***. YOU MAY BE ABLE TO HELP US FIGURE OUT WHAT THE HARVESTERS WERE AND HOW TO STOP THEM SHOULD THEY RETURN. WILL YOU COOPERATE? WILL YOU HELP US?
--AND YOU'LL FIND ANDY?
I WILL DO MY BEST, TIM. I PROMISE.
THEN I WILL HELP. I PROMISE TOO.
I WAS DESIGNED TO HELP PEOPLE, RIGHT DOCTOR QUON?
GREAT. SO WHY DON'T YOU GET DRESSED. MR. TULLIS IS GOING TO WAKE UP YOUR BIG FRIEND DOWN IN THE CARGO HOLD...
THAT'S RIGHT. ALL THE TIMS WERE DESIGNED TO HELP AND PROTECT THEIR HUMAN COMPANIONS.
THEN THAT'S WHAT I'LL DO! I'LL HELP!


"...SOMETHING TELLS ME HE MAY NEED YOUR HELP.
GRRRRRRRR...
>:(
SHUT UP YAPPY-BOT-*DRILLER IS A KILLER!* BUT DRILLER CAN'T BARELY THINK WITH YOU MAKIN' ALL THAT RACKET!
STAND DOWN, YOU BIG BOX OF BOLTS, OR I SWEAR I'LL MELT YOUR DAMN HEAD!
RUFF!
RUFF!
YOU AIN'T GONNA TOUCH ME AGAIN, YOU UGLY SACK OF MEAT! DRILLER IS A KILLER! DRILLER A REAL KILLER!
NO! STOP!

LITTLE BOY-BOT? YER FIXED?
YES--I'M ALL RIGHT.
RRF!
RRF!!
I KNOW, BANDIT. I MISSED YOU TOO.
THESE PEOPLE SAVED ME. THEY ARE HERE TO HELP US. AND THEY SAID YOU HELPED ME TOO, RIGHT? YOU TRIED TO SAVE ME?
HRRM-DRILLER JUST A DUMB MINE-DROID. DRILLER TOO STUPID TO FIX YOU LITTLE BOY-BOT.
BUT YOU TRIED. THAT'S WHAT MATTERS...
I'M TIM-21. THIS IS BANDIT.
RRR?
DRILLER IS DRILLER. YOU IS TIM-21. YAPPY-BOT IS BANDIT.
YES. THAT'S RIGHT. HELLO, DRILLER.
DRILLER, SOME REALLY BAD THINGS HAVE HAPPENED IN THE GALAXY WHILE WE WERE ON THE MINING COLONY.
BUT YOU HAVE TO PROMISE ME YOU WON'T HURT THEM. IF YOU DO THEY WILL SHUT YOU DOWN AGAIN.
HRRM... HATE HUMANS, TIM-21. AND YOU SHOULD TOO!

LOOK, YOU THREE ARE UNDER THE PROTECTION OF THE UGC NOW. THE SCRAPPERS AND ALL THE REST OF THE ANTI-BOT FACTIONS WILL NOT BE ABLE TO TOUCH YOU. YOU ARE SAFE WITH US.
SEE, SO, DO WE HAVE A DEAL? NO HURTING ANYONE?
HRRM...
OKAY, LITTLE TIM-21 BOT...
DRILLER PROMISE. DRILLER NO KILLER. FOR NOW.
GOOD, IT'S SETTLED THEN. NO KILLING. TULLIS, PLOT A COURSE TO NIYRATA...
"LET'S GET THE HELL OUT OF THIS FRINGE HOLE."


--THAT IS IMPOSSIBLE, TELSA. THERE IS NO WAY THE SCRAPPERS COULD HAVE KNOWN ABOUT YOUR MISSION. ONLY THE UGC COUNCIL KNEW--
WELL SOMEONE ON THE UGC IS A RAT, GENERAL NAGOKI.
=SIGH= TELSA, WE'RE ON A PRIVATE CHANNEL. YOU DON'T HAVE TO CALL ME GENERAL.
OKAY, OKAY...SORRY, DAD. I JUST--
LOOK, I GET IT. I KNOW HOW IMPORTANT THIS IS. AND YOU ALSO KNOW THAT YOU CAN TRUST ME. RIGHT?
OF COURSE, I TRUST YOU TELSA. I JUST WORRY...
WELL STOP WORRYING. WE'RE IN SHIFTSPACE NOW. TIM-21 IS SAFELY IN THE CARGO HOLD WITH QUON. WE'LL BE BACK ON NIYRATA WITHIN THE DAY, DADDY. I CAN HANDLE THIS.
OF COURSE. GOODBYE, DEAR.
BYE, DAD.
KZZZT
KNOCK KNOCK
LOOK, I THINK TULLIS NEEDS ME, I'LL CALL WHEN WE GET TO ORBIT.

SWIP
QUON? WHAT'S WRONG, SOMETHING HAPPEN WITH THE BOTS?
NO... I JUST WONDERED IF I COULD HAVE A QUICK WORD? I WASN'T INTERRUPTING ANYTHING WAS I?
NO, JUST MY FATHER CHECKING IN ON THE MISSION.
YOU'RE FATHER? I THOUGHT THIS MISSION WAS CLASSIFIED?
UGH--RIGHT. LOOK...I DON'T WANT YOU TO MAKE A BIG DEAL OUT OF IT OR ANYTHING, BUT GENERAL NAGOKI IS MY FATHER.
NAGOKI?! THE HEAD OF THE UGC?!
BUT YOU DON'T LOOK LIKE--
I GOT MY MOTHER'S LOOKS, THANK GOD.
OH. IS SHE IN THE UGC COUNCIL AS WELL?
NO...

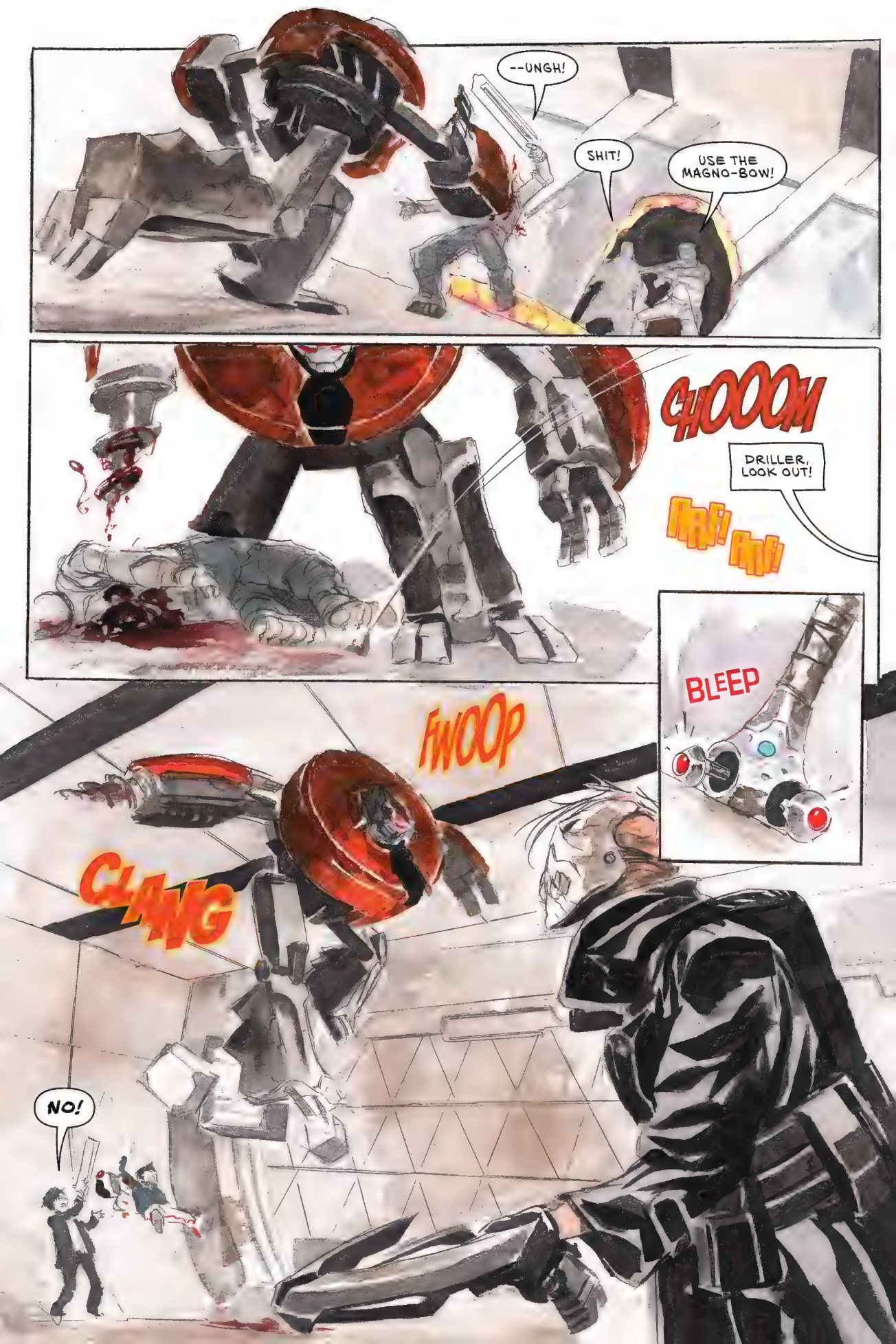
...
WHAT IS IT, QUON? WHAT DID YOU WANT?
YES. AHEM--I WAS HOPING TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT TIM-21'S DREAM.
PLEASE, DOCTOR. MACHINES DON'T DREAM. HE WAS PROBABLY JUST PROCESSING HIS LOST DATA OR SOME CRAP.
LOOK, THAT'S NOT ALL THAT'S BEEN BOTHERING ME. YOU PROMISED TIM-21 YOU'D LOOK FOR HIS BROTH--HIS COMPANION, ANDY. BUT YOU TOLD ME NO ONE GOT OFF THE COLONY?
TWO SHUTTLES LAUNCHED BUT THEY MALFUNCTIONED BEFORE THEY EVER GOT OUT OF ORBIT.
SO YOU LIED TO HIM.
IT. NOT HIM. TIM-21 IS ONLY A MACHINE, QUON.
IF THAT BOT CAN HELP US FIGURE OUT WHAT THE HELL THE HARVESTERS ARE...OR IF THEY'RE COMING BACK... I'LL DO ANYTHING. GOT IT, DOC?
DON'T BE SO SENSITIVE, QUON. I JUST MEANT--
CAPTAIN! GET TO THE BRIDGE... NOW!
WHAT NOW, TULLIS?!
I HAD TO PULL US OUT OF SHIFTSPACE, CAPTAIN. WE GOT COMPANY...

WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S HAPPENING?
MORE SCRAPPERS. THEY MUST HAVE FOLLOWED OUR TRAIL INTO SHIFTSPACE FROM DIRISHU.
I TRIED TO CLOAK US AS BEST I COULD, CAPTAIN.
WHAT IS--
TAKE THE BOTS TO THE CARGO HOLD, DOCTOR. IF THOSE SCRAPPERS GET IN, START SHOOTING!
I'M A SCIENTIST, NOT A SOLDIER!
YOU'RE WHATEVER THE HELL I SAY YOU ARE! SO SHUT UP AND MOVE!

HRRM. CAN I KILL THEM NOW, TIM-21 BOT?
NO! PLEASE JUST WAIT, DRILLER. IT WILL BE OKAY-- YOU'LL SEE!
PLASMA TURRET IS ACTIVE, TULLIS. I'M GOING TO BLAST THE-- OH NO!
WHAT IS IT, CAPTAIN?
THAT'S NOT JUST A SCRAP SHIP ON OUR ASSES, TULLIS--
"--IT'S A SQUID SHIP!"
INITIATING EVASIVE MANEUVERS, CAPTAIN. YOU NEED TO BLAST THOSE TENTACLES BEFORE THEY LATCH ON!
JUST GET US OUT OF HERE, TULLIS!!
GHOOM GHOOOM GHOOM

T-BOOM
GOT ONE!
I'M READING THREE CARBON-BASED LIFE FORMS. ONE IN THE BRIDGE, ONE IN THE GUN TURRET AND ONE BELOW IN WHAT'S PROBABLY THE CARGO HOLD, ALONG WITH THREE SILICON-BASED UNITS.
"TARGET THE CARGO AREA. ALL TENTACLES. THAT'S WHERE THE BOTS ARE!"
BOOM
BOOM
KRENCH

DAMN! ONE OF THEM GOT THROUGH, CAPTAIN...THEY LATCHED TO THE CARGO HOLD!
THEY'RE GOING STRAIGHT FOR THE BOTS!
D--DOCTOR--
KRENCH
IT'S GOING TO BE OKAY, TIM-21...TELSA WON'T LET THEM HURT YOU.
DRILLER KILLER NOW?
CLANG
YES! DRILLER KILLER! DRILLER KILLER!!
HRRM. GOOD.
KRRRRRRR

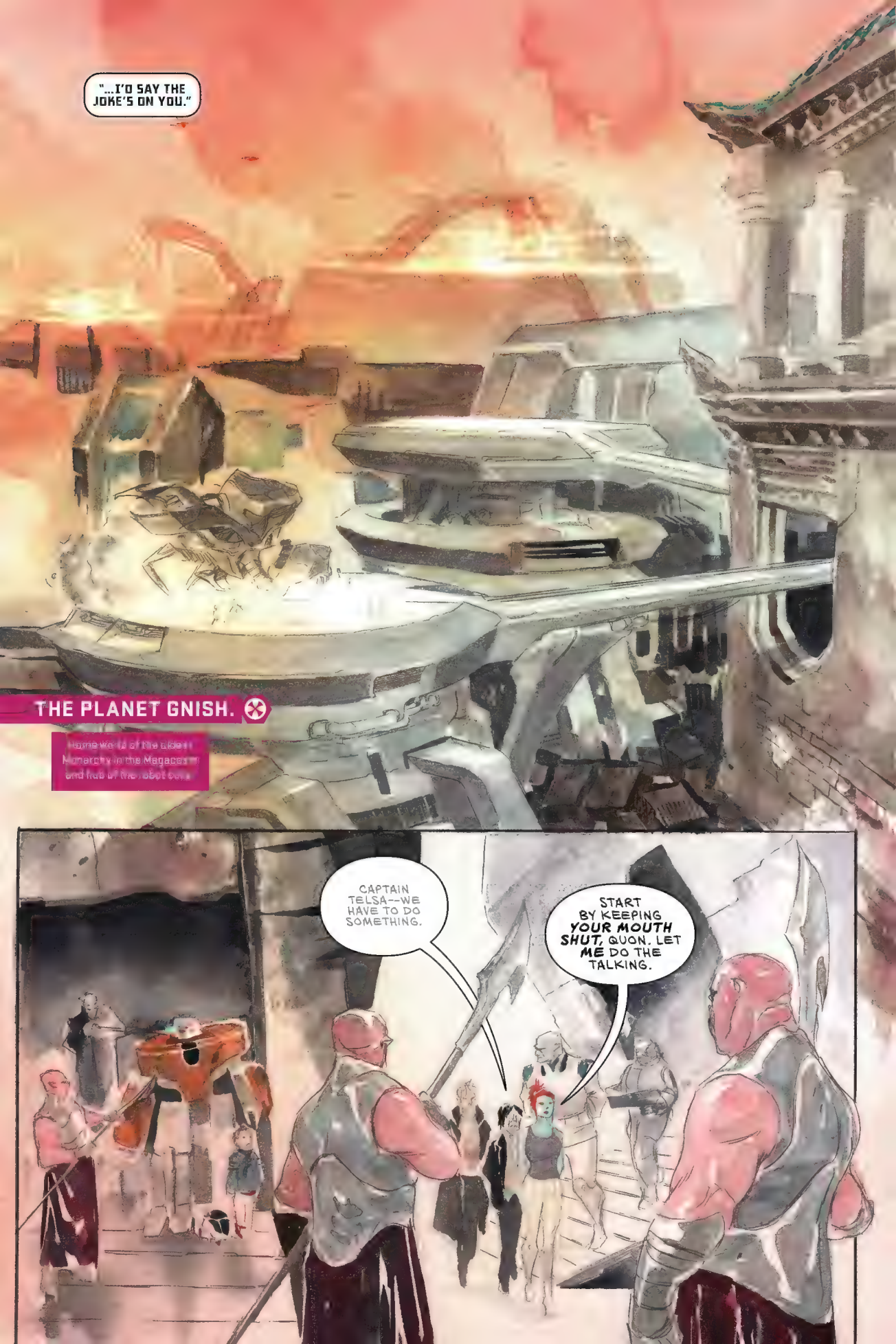

--UNGH!
SHIT!
USE THE MAGNO-BOW!
KHOOOM
DRILLER, LOOK OUT!
RRR! RRR!
BLEEP
FWOOP
CLANG
NO!

ARF?!
J-JUST MAGNETS, BANDIT. I KNOW IT HURTS--D-DON'T BE SCARED.
HUMPH--THAT'S ONE BIG SON OF A BITCH, AIN'T HE?
ONE'A THOSE OLD DROP N' DEPLOY DRILLERS. HAVEN'T SEEN ONE OF THOSE IN AGES, BOSS.
HRRM--DRILLER CUT YER EYES OUT, HUME. THEN YOU SEE NOTHING AGAIN.
AND WHAT'S YOUR STORY? THIS IS A UGC SHIP. YOU DON'T LOOK UGC.
PLEASE-- PLEASE--I'M NOT WITH THESE PEOPLE... I--I KNOW BOTS. I CAN BE VALUABLE TO YOU--
YOU COWARD, QUON. YOU SELL US OUT THAT EASILY?
NOW...*YOU TWO* ON THE OTHER HAND *DEFINITELY* LOOK UGC. AND YOUR WEAPONS ARE UGC ISSUE. WHICH MEANS YOU TAKE ANOTHER STEP INTO THE CARGO HOLD AND THEY STICK TO THE WALLS JUST LIKE THESE ROBBIES.

NOTHING STOPPING ME FROM PUTTING A BLAST BETWEEN YOUR EYES FROM RIGHT HERE.
GO FOR IT, DARLIN'. YOU THINK YOU AND YOUR BUDDY CAN DROP US ALL BEFORE WE TAKE OUT AT LEAST TWO OF THOSE BOTS AND THIS USELESS TWIB, YOU'RE WELCOME TO TRY.
TELSA... PLEASE...
SHUT UP, QUON!
C--CAPTAIN TELSA, D--DON'T LET THEM TAKE US.
SORRY, KID. LOOKS LIKE THEY ALREADY GOT US.
BUT YOU SHOULD KNOW, WHATEVER YOU'LL GET AT A SCRAP SATELLITE FOR THESE BOTS, THE UGC WILL BE WILLING TO DOUBLE IT.
OH, WE AIN'T GOING TO NO LITTLE SCRAP SAT. THESE BOTS ARE SPECIAL ORDER... FROM THE BIG BOSSES. WE'RE GOING RIGHT TO GNISH...

"...WE'RE TAKING THESE BOTS TO THE MELTING PITS!"

HRRM--HE SHOULD BE SCARED. THEM SCRAPPERS ARE TAKING US TO *GNISH*. WE'RE GONNA GET MELTED TO SLUDGE.
BUT--DON'T YOU THINK CAPTAIN TELSA CAN SAVE US? SHE PROMISED WE'D BE OKAY.
HRRM--SHUT THE YAPPY-BOT UP. GOT ENOUGH TO WORRY ABOUT WITHOUT HIS ARFING ALL THE TIME!
HE'S JUST SCARED, DRILLER.
NEVER TRUST A HRRRMAN, LITTLE-BOT.
BUT SHE--SHE SAID SHE WOULD HELP ME FIND ANDY. SHE MEANT IT, DIDN'T SHE, DRILLER?
I ALREADY SAID WHAT I GOTTA SAY ABOUT THAT. NEVER TRUST A HUME! *NEVER.*
BUT THAT IS WHAT I WAS PROGRAMMED TO DO. I AM A COMPANION BOT. I AM ***MEANT*** TO TRUST MY HUMAN COMPANIONS.
WELL THEN, LITTLE-BOT--


"...I'D SAY THE JOKE'S ON YOU."
THE PLANET GNISH.
CAPTAIN TELSA--WE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING.
START BY KEEPING YOUR MOUTH SHUT, QUON. LET ME DO THE TALKING.

YOU ALL SHOULD SHUT YOUR HOLES. JUST KEEP WALKING, DARLIN'
LAY ANOTHER HAND ON HER AND I'LL EAT YOUR DAMN HEAD, SCRAP SCUM.
OHHHH... I'M SCARED. TOUGH GUY, EH?
TAKE THESE CUFFS OFF AND LET'S FIND OUT.
TULLIS, LOOK...
...WE HAVE COMPANY.
ALL PREPARE FOR THE COMING OF THE TRIUMPHANT RULER OF GNISH AND ITS PROUD MOONS...THE SCARLET WARRIOR KING--
--THE CHAMPION OF THE RIGHT TRUE GNISHIAN PEOPLE--THE FATHER OF THE NEW AGE--
--OH WOULD YOU SHUT UP!
--AHEM... HIS HIGHNESS, KING S'NOK III.
THIS HIM?
IT'S HIM ALL RIGHT, S'NOK--JIN QUON HIMSELF.
THE FATHER OF ROBOTICS, EH?

YOU FILTHY LITTLE BASTARD. I SHOULD HANG YOU IN THE MELTING PITS.
Y--YOUR HIGHNESS I ASSURE YOU I--
QUIET! THERE'LL BE TIME FOR TALKING LATER.
AND THIS IS THE LITTLE ROBBIE THAT'S CAUSED ALL THE FUSS, EH?
A FIGHTER, EH? WE'LL SEE ABOUT THAT.
--KEEP THAT MAGNO-LEASH TIGHT! THAT BIG ONE IS A FIGHTER.
HRRMMM!
KING S'NOK. WE ARE ON A PRIORITY MISSION DIRECT FROM THE UGC COUNCIL. IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT WE TRANSPORT THESE BOTS BACK TO NIYRATA. I KNOW THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN GNISH AND THE UGC HAS BEEN STRAINED SINCE THE--
STRAINED?! HA!
I'D SAY "STRAINED" IS THE UNDERSTATEMENT OF THE DECADE. AND I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT KIND OF MISSION YOU'RE ON.
WE INTERCEPTED YOUR TRANSMISSIONS. I KNOW ALL ABOUT THIS LITTLE ROBBIE. AND IF HE REALLY DOES HAVE A CONNECTION TO THE HARVESTERS, I'LL RIP HIM APART UNTIL I FIND IT!
--UNGH!
GRRRAAA...

HRRRM...DON'T TOUCH THE LITTLE BOT! DRILLER A KILLER! DRILLER A REAL--
HRRRRMMMM--
QUIET!
TAKE THE HUMES AND THE LITTLE ROBBIE TO MY OPERATING THEATER.
WHAT ABOUT THE BIG ONE?
LET'S SEE IF HE REALLY IS A FIGHTER. TAKE HIM AND THAT ANNOYING LITTLE SHIT-BOT TO THE MELTING PITS!

THE PLANET NIYRATA.
Once the cultural and technological hub of the Magacosm, Niyrata is still the home to what's left of the United Galactic Council (UGC).
--AND WHAT'S THE SITUATION ON SAMPSON, AMBASSADOR TELEMA? ARE THE GNISHIANS STILL HOLDING THE THIRD MOON?
YES, GENERAL NAGOKI. THE GNISHIAN SWARMS HAVE BEEN MUCH MORE AGGRESSIVE OF LATE.
AND THE PROGNOSTICS OF SILENOS ARE ALSO PREDICTING THE GNISHIANS WILL MAKE A MOVE INTO THAT PLANET'S SYSTEM BY THE END OF THE YEAR.
IS THE UGC REALLY TO PUT ANY MORE STOCK INTO YOUR PREDICTIONS, CHIEF? YOU'VE HARDLY HAD AN ACCURATE FORECAST SINCE THE HARVESTERS.
A NUMBER OF OUR OLDEST TELEPATHS HAD THEIR MINDS BROKEN DURING THE HARVESTER ATTACKS.
IT'S TAKEN TIME TO TRAIN SUITABLE REPLACE-MENTS.
BUT THIS PREDICTION IS STRONG. OUR COUNCIL BELIEVES THE GNISHIANS ARE ON THE MOVE, GENERAL.

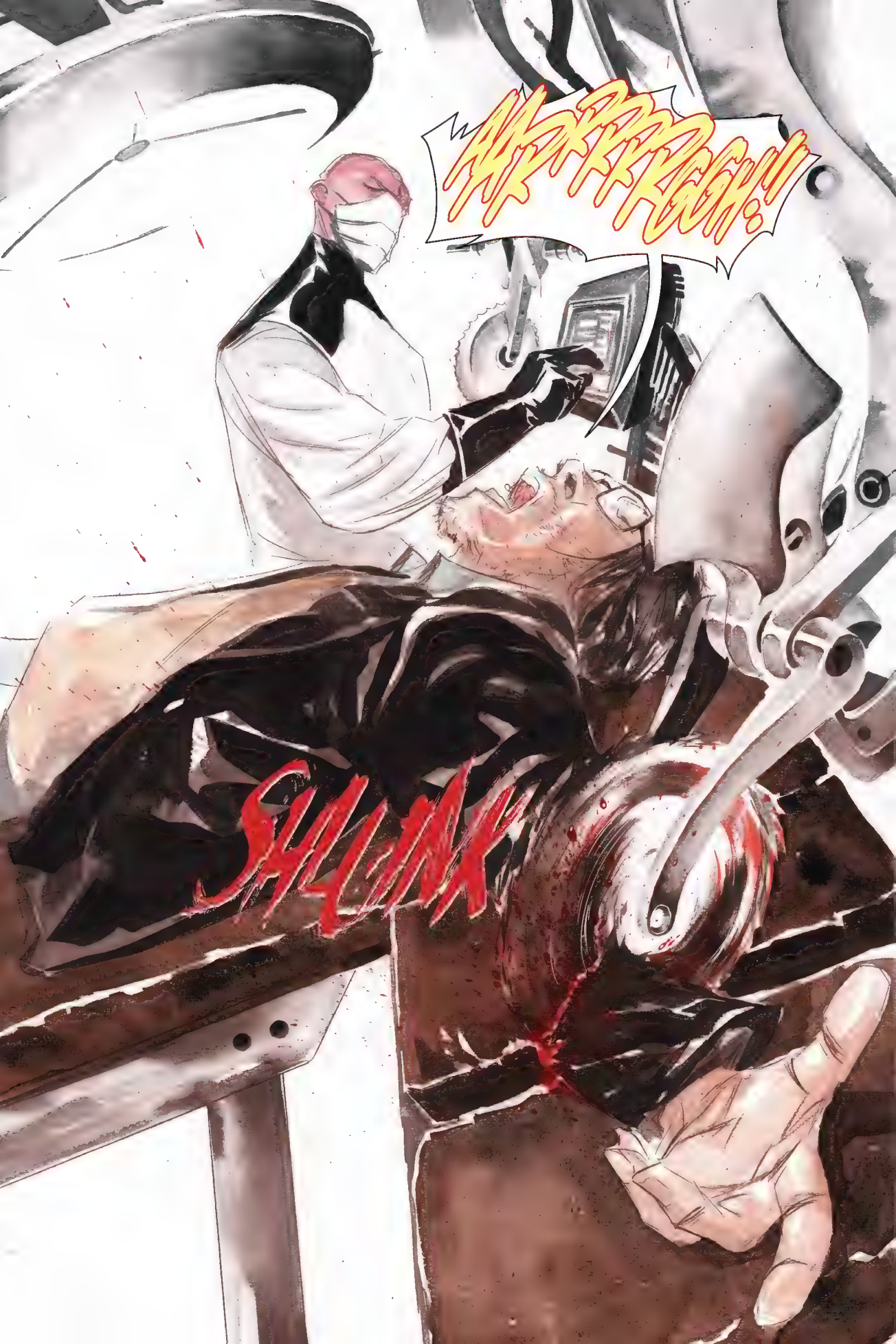
THIS IS RIDICULOUS, NAGOKI! YOU NEED TO FREE UP MORE TROOPS FROM SAMPSON! IF SILENOS FALLS, KNOSSOS WILL BE NEXT.
SINCE THE HARVESTER ATTACKS, THE UGC HAS BEEN IN CHAOS.
WE WEAKEN ALL THE TIME AS THE GNISHIAN ALLIANCE GROWS. AMUN ALREADY SIDES WITH THEM, IF WE LOSE SAMPSON TOO...
WHAT CAN A SINGLE ROBOT DO?
HIS MACHINE CODEX...IT IS AN IDENTICAL MATCH FOR THE HARVESTER CODEX. THE BOY MAY BE THE MISSING LINK WE HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR TO FINALLY UNDERSTAND WHAT THE HARVESTERS ARE.
=SIGH= I DIDN'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT THIS YET--BUT THERE IS A MISSION CURRENTLY UNDERWAY THAT MAY CHANGE EVERYTHING, AMBASSADOR.
A WEEK AGO WE PICKED UP AN EMERGENCY CALL FROM ONE OF THE FRINGE COLONIES. IT WAS PLACED BY A ROBOT--ONE OF THE LATER MODEL HUMAN COMPANION BOTS. A BOY--
HOW IS FIGURING OUT THE HARVESTER CODEX GOING TO WIN THE WAR?
...
YOU--YOU WANT TO BUILD YOUR OWN!
WE HAVE LIVED IN FEAR OF THOSE DAMNED THINGS RETURNING TO FINISH THE JOB FOR THE LAST TEN YEARS! I'M TIRED OF WAITING--NOW WE CAN PREPARE!
I AM TALKING ABOUT THE PERFECT PLANETARY PROTECTION SYSTEM. IF THEY COME BACK WE WILL BE READY.
WHAM

:AHEM: GENERAL! WAIT-- GENERAL, IF I COULD JUST HAVE A MOMENT!
WHAT IS IT?! I'M DUE TO SPEAK TO THE AMBASSADOR FROM AMUN IN TEN MINUTES, AND I'M STARVING.
SIR, IT'S YOUR DAUGHTER... TESLA.
WHAT? IS SHE BACK ALREADY? HAVE HER COME HERE WITH THE BOT IMMEDIATELY!
NO, SIR...I'M AFRAID IT'S BAD NEWS. YOU SEE TESLA'S SHIP WAS INTERCEPTED ON THE WAY HOME. I--I'M AFRAID THE GNISHIANS HAVE HER, GENERAL.
WHAT?--TH-THAT CAN'T BE. THEY HAD OUR BEST SHIFTSHIP. HOW COULD--?
IT WAS A SCRAPPER ELITE SQUAD, SIR. THEY HAD A SQUIDSHIP. DEFINITELY WORKING WITH THE GNISHIES. OUR LAST SCANS SHOW THEM ARRIVING IN GNISH ORBIT. I--I'M VERY SORRY SIR.

H--HAVE THE WAR ROOM ASSEMBLE. I WANT ALL RESCUE OPTIONS ON THE TABLE--
--IZZZT--THIS IS 10-R34 REPORTING ON SECURE HARDWIRE CHANNEL 3.
THE TARGET IS ON GNISH. I REPEAT, I HAVE RELIABLE INTEL THAT THE TARGET IS NOW ON GNISH.
--LONG LIVE THE HARDWIRE-- FTZZZT!!

I'M WORRIED ABOUT DRILLER AND BANDIT, MS. TELSA. DO YOU THINK THEY'RE OKAY?
HONESTLY, TIM...NO. NO, I DON'T.
...AND I THINK YOU SHOULD BE MORE WORRIED ABOUT *YOURSELF* RIGHT ABOUT NOW.
BRING HIM HERE...LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH.

YOUR MAJESTY-- PLEASE! THERE IS NO NEED TO HARM THE ROBOT. IF YOU LET US GO, THE UGC WILL SHARE ANYTHING WE LEARN WITH--
HARM THE ROBOT?! NO, NO...YOU HAVE IT ALL WRONG. IT'S NOT THE ROBOT WE'RE GOING TO TORTURE...
IT'S HIM. THE GOOD DOCTOR QUON BUILT THE DAMN ROBOT--IT'S HIM MY ROYAL SURGEONS ARE GOING TO RIP APART UNTIL HE GIVES US THE SECRETS OF THE HARVESTERS!
WHA-- ME?! NO--
NO!!
OH GOD! P--PLEASE! I'LL TELL YOU ANYTHING! ANYTHING!
FINE. TELL US WHAT THE HARVESTERS ARE.
I--I DON'T KNOW.
REFRESH HIS MEMORY.
YES, YOUR MAJESTY.

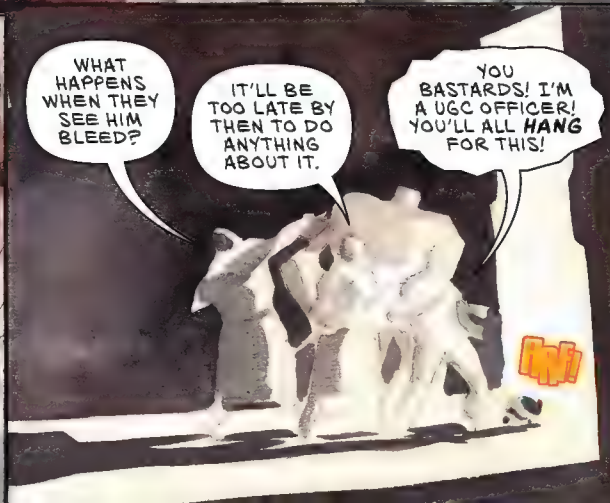

AAARRRGH!!!
SHUNK

HRRMM... DRILLER DON'T LIKE THIS PLACE.
I DON'T LIKE IT MUCH EITHER, BUT CAN'T YOU SHUT THAT THING UP? HE'S NOT MAKING THINGS ANY BETTER!
RAWF!

OH, HE'LL BE QUIET SOON ENOUGH, BIG FELLA. DON'T YOU WORRY.

S'NOK WANTS THESE ONES MOVED UP. WANTS THEM IN *THE PITS* RIGHT AWAY.
HE DOES, DOES HE? WHATEVER HAPPENED TO PROTOCOL?! I GOT A BACK LOG OF ROBBIES DOWN HERE TO BEGIN WITH!
HUMPH! WELL I GUESS LORD FATTY WANTS WHAT HE WANTS!

HUMPH! WHAT ABOUT THE BIG UGLY HUME?
THROW HIM IN TOO. WE'LL SAY WE THOUGHT HE WAS AN ANDROID.


WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THEY SEE HIM BLEED?
IT'LL BE TOO LATE BY THEN TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT.
YOU BASTARDS! I'M A UGC OFFICER! YOU'LL ALL *HANG* FOR THIS!
RAWF!

WELL, WELL... LOOKIE HERE...WE GOT SOME NEW BOTS FOR THE PITS! YOU ALL KNOW THE RULES... BOT VERSUS BOT!

WINNER KEEPS FIGHTING... ***LOSERS GET THE PIT!*** EITHER WAY... ***OIL WILL BE SPILLED!***

...WE'RE FUCKED.

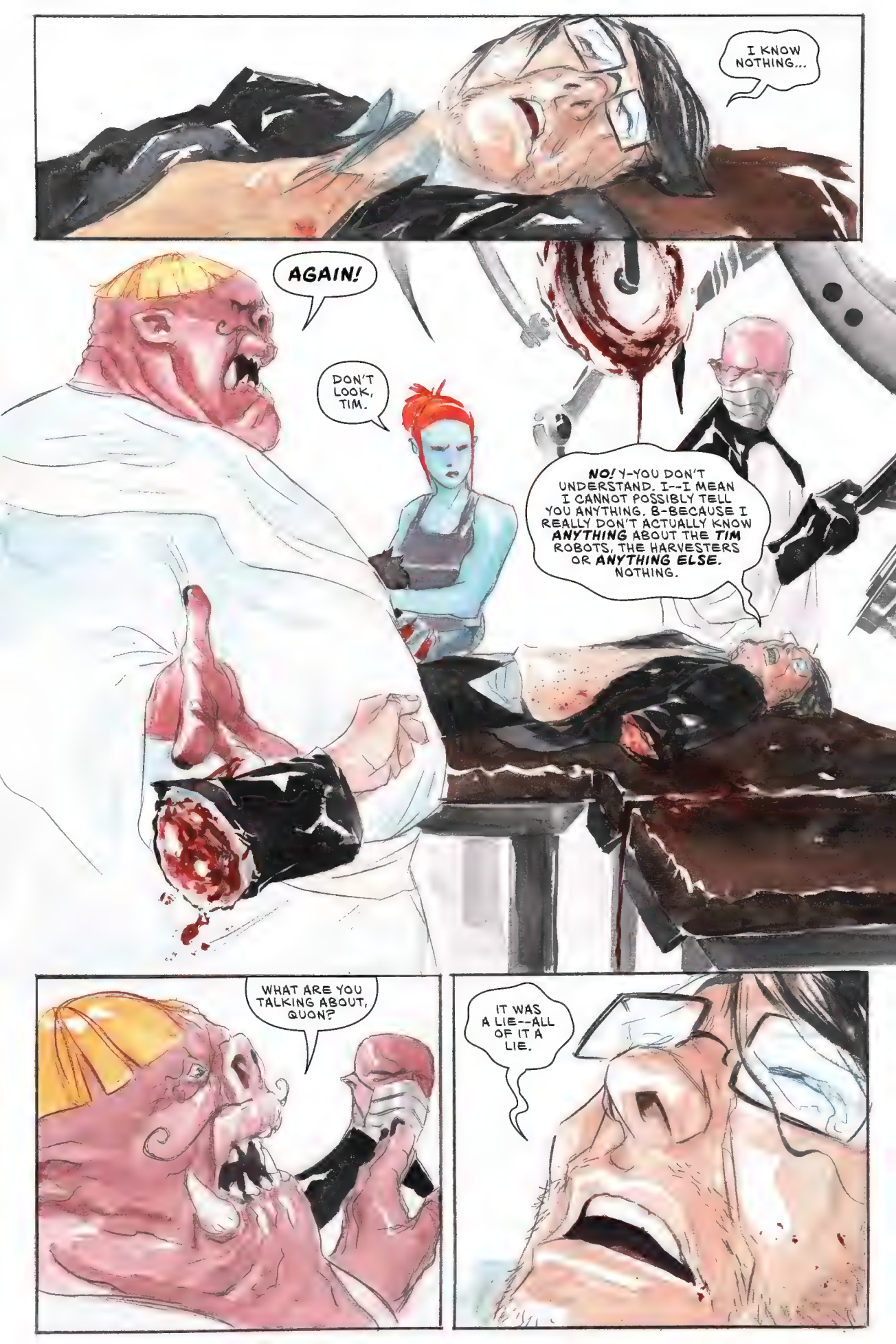
ARF!

HRRMMM--DRILLER AGREES WITH UGLY HUME. DRILLER AND YAPPY-BOT ARE FUCKED.

LET THE GAMES BEGIN!
HOPE YOU DON'T GOT ANY PROBLEM SCRAPPING OTHER ROBBIES, DRILLER?
HRRRMMM... DRILLER A KILLER. DRILLER A REAL KILLER!
GOOD TO HEAR.
HAF!
VRRRRRRRRR

HRRMMM-- MILITARY MECHS.
DRILLER HATES SNOOTY MILITARY MECHS. ALWAYS THINKIN' THEY'RE BETTER THAN DRILLER!
BRAT -AT -AT-AT -AT
WHAT ARE YOU DOING, UGLY HUME?
WHAT'S IT LOOK LIKE...
KRRRRTCH!
...GETTING A GUN!
KRENCH!
BRAT-AT-AT-AT -AT
HERE THEY COME!
13
SHUT UP, YAPPY! AN' WHATEVER YA DO... WHATEVER HAPPENS-- STAY BEHIND ME!

DR. QUON!
MAKE THEM STOP!
=UGH= GET OFF! CAN'T YOU TURN DOWN YOUR EMOTION SETTINGS OR SOMETHING?
I-I CAN'T. IT'S HOW DR. QUON MADE ME. TO BETTER EMPATHIZE WITH MY HUMAN COMPANIONS.
...WONDERFUL.
OH--OH MY GOD!
HOLD HIM AS I CAUTERIZE IT.
SZZZZZ
NOW THEN-- DO YOU THINK YOU MIGHT REMEMBER ANYTHING, DOCTOR QUON?
OR SHOULD WE TAKE THE OTHER ARM? OR PERHAPS WE SHOULD START CUTTING A BIT LOWER?


I KNOW NOTHING...
AGAIN!
DON'T LOOK, TIM.
NO! Y-YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. I--I MEAN I CANNOT POSSIBLY TELL YOU ANYTHING. B-BECAUSE I REALLY DON'T ACTUALLY KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THE TIM ROBOTS, THE HARVESTERS OR ANYTHING ELSE. NOTHING.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, QUON?
IT WAS A LIE--ALL OF IT A LIE.

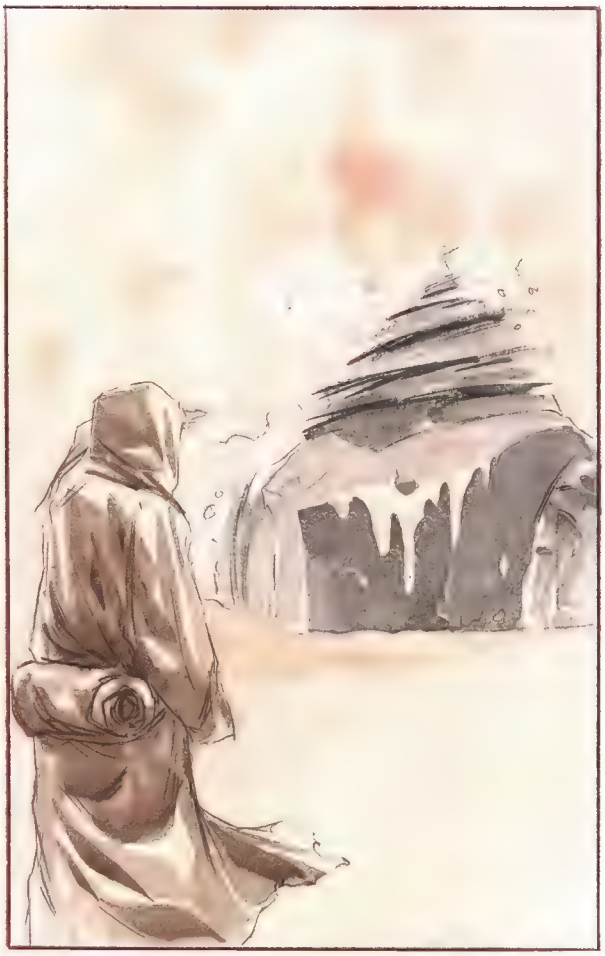
I--I DIDN'T INVENT ANY OF THE ROBOTS. I--I STOLE ALL MY RESEARCH, ALL THE ROBOT DESIGNS--
I'M A FRAUD.

THE PLANET OSTRAKON.
FIFTEEN YEARS AGO.

SHINK

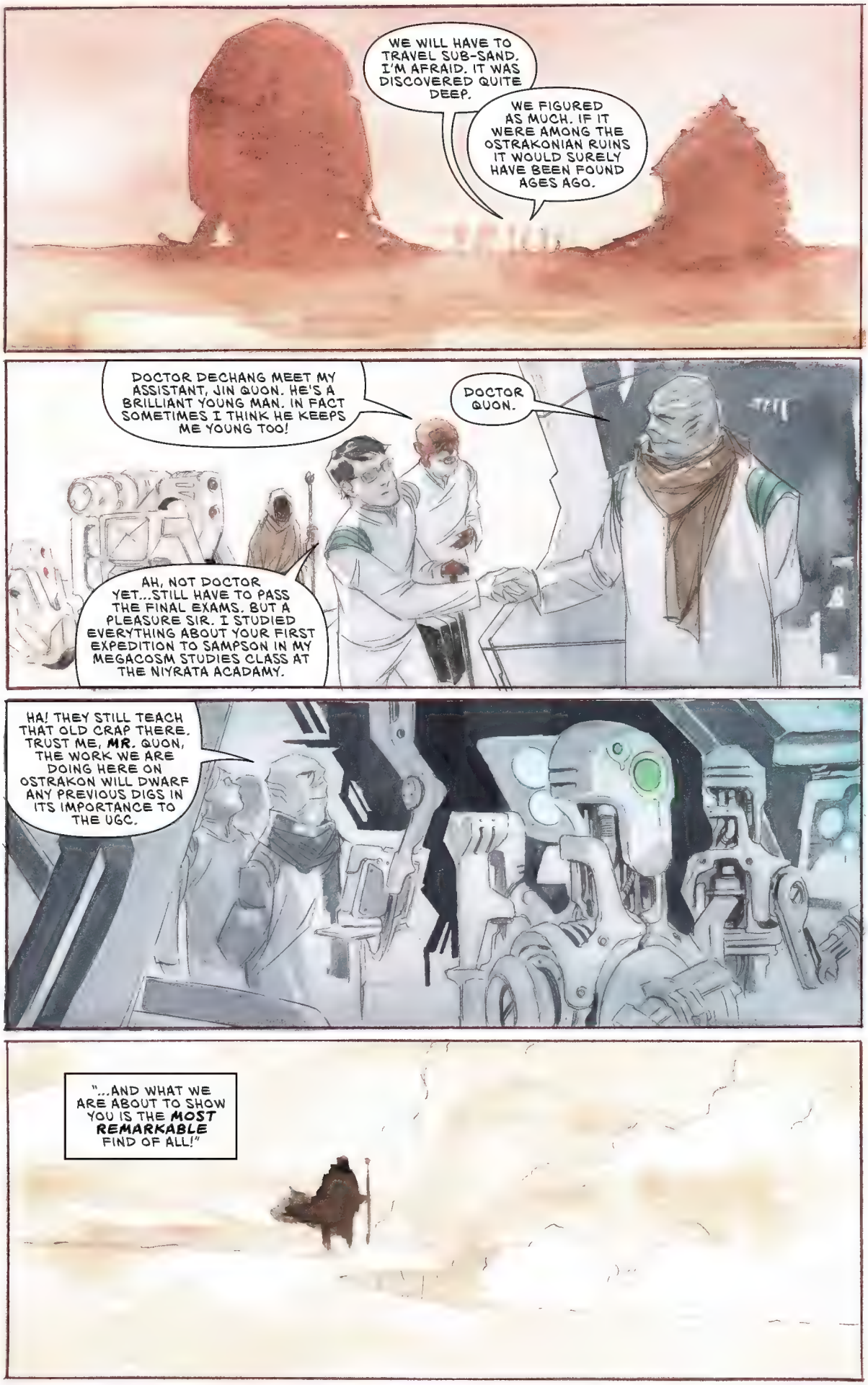
BLEED

KRACKLE



SPOTTER, WHERE ARE THEY?! MAYBE WE HAVE THE WRONG COORDINATES?
THIS IS THE SPOT! THEY SHOULD BE HERE BY NOW!

THERE!
PROFESSOR SOLOMON! WELCOME TO OSTRAKON. WE ARE SO HONORED TO HAVE YOU, SIR!
DOCTOR DECHANG! THE PLEASURE IS MINE.
I MUST ADMIT, THAT WAS THE LONGEST CRYO-TRIP OF MY LIFE. AND I'VE BEEN ON MORE THAN A FEW. I COULD NOT WAIT TO GET HERE! WHERE IS IT?!


WE WILL HAVE TO TRAVEL SUB-SAND. I'M AFRAID. IT WAS DISCOVERED QUITE DEEP.
WE FIGURED AS MUCH. IF IT WERE AMONG THE OSTRAKONIAN RUINS IT WOULD SURELY HAVE BEEN FOUND AGES AGO.
DOCTOR DECHANG MEET MY ASSISTANT, JIN QUON. HE'S A BRILLIANT YOUNG MAN. IN FACT SOMETIMES I THINK HE KEEPS ME YOUNG TOO!
DOCTOR QUON.
AH, NOT DOCTOR YET...STILL HAVE TO PASS THE FINAL EXAMS. BUT A PLEASURE SIR. I STUDIED EVERYTHING ABOUT YOUR FIRST EXPEDITION TO SAMPSON IN MY MEGACOSM STUDIES CLASS AT THE NIYRATA ACADAMY.
HA! THEY STILL TEACH THAT OLD CRAP THERE. TRUST ME, MR. QUON, THE WORK WE ARE DOING HERE ON OSTRAKON WILL DWARF ANY PREVIOUS DIGS IN ITS IMPORTANCE TO THE UGC.
"...AND WHAT WE ARE ABOUT TO SHOW YOU IS THE MOST REMARKABLE FIND OF ALL!"

"AND YOU HAVEN'T TOUCHED IT?

I'M ONLY AN ARCHEOLOGIST, PROFESSOR SOLOMON. JUST A UGC GRUNT WITH A SHOVEL. TRUST ME, THIS IS NOT MY AREA OF SPECIALTY. THAT'S WHY I INSISTED ON YOU... THE FATHER OF MODERN ROBOTICS.

DON'T TRY AND FLATTER HIM, DOCTOR. IF HIS HEAD GETS ANY BIGGER, THOSE OLD BONES MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO HOLD IT UP ANY LONGER.

HUSH, QUON, OR I'LL SEND YOU BACK TO THE ACADEMY.

Doctor Dechang. We are now approaching the dig site.

THANK YOU, L-445.

ONE OF YOUR MODELS, PROFESSOR?

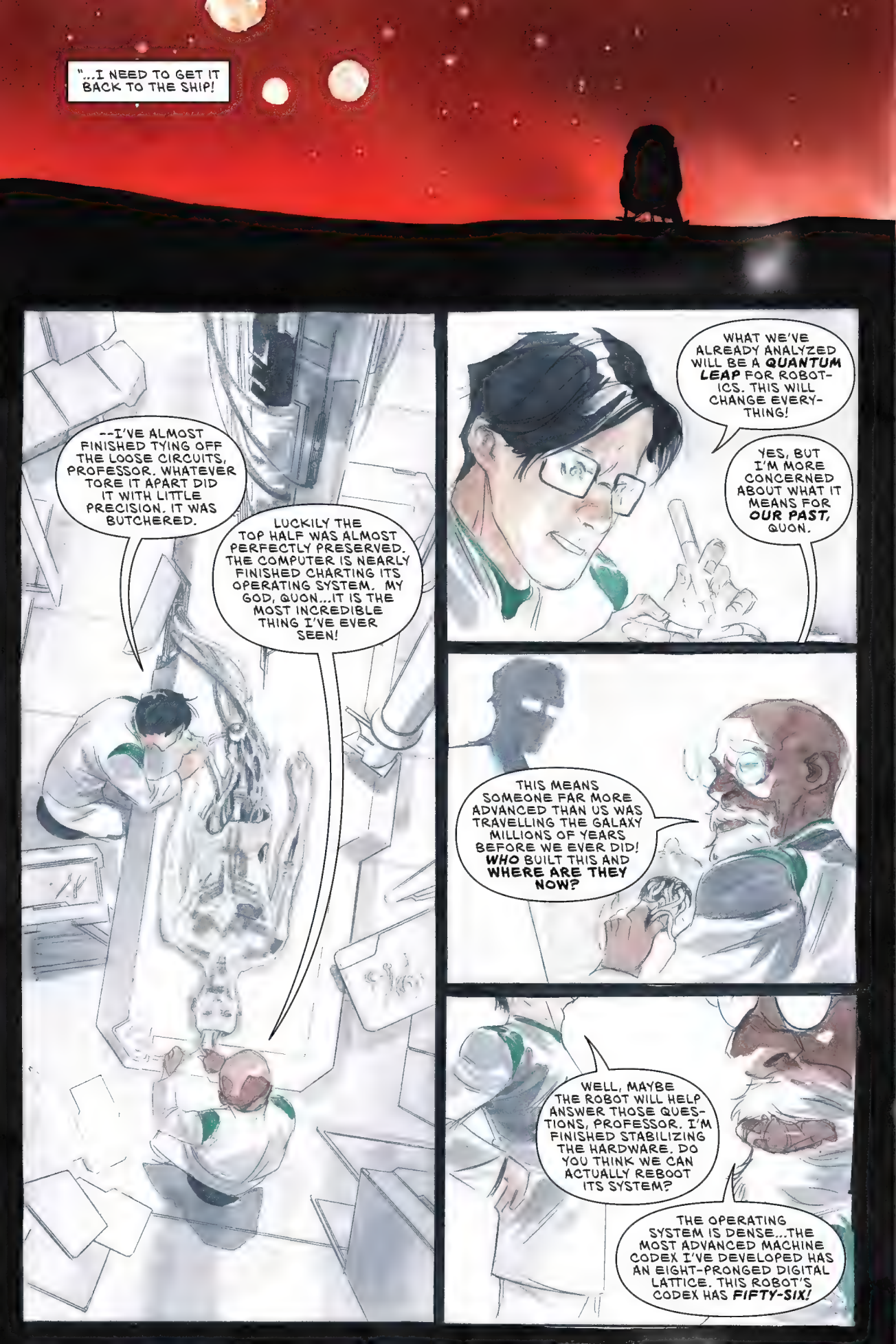
HMM...YES. THE L-PILOT SERIES. A GOOD BATCH.

THE L'S ***ARE*** GREAT PILOTS, BUT THIS STILL GETS A BIT ROCKY UP AHEAD, SO HOLD ON...

...HERE WE ARE!

YOU UNDERSTAND WHY WE WERE SO BAFFLED. THE OSTRAKONIANS WERE A PRIMITIVE SPECIES. THEY WENT EXTINCT MILLIONS OF YEARS AGO, MILLENNIA BEFORE ANY OF OUR RACES DEVELOPED SPACE TRAVEL.
WELL, IF IT IS WHAT YOU THINK IT IS, THAT MEANS SOMEONE MUST HAVE COME HERE BEFORE YOUR TEAM, DOCTOR. ANOTHER UNCHARTED UGC DIG TEAM PERHAPS? EARLY COLONISTS?
NO. I ASSURE YOU, DOCTOR SOLOMON, WE ARE THE FIRST PEOPLE TO EVER DIG HERE OR EXCAVATE THESE RUINS.
ALL DUE RESPECT, DOCTOR DECHANG. THAT WOULD MAKE YOUR CLAIM AN IMPOSSIBILITY.
WELL, QUON, YOU CAN PROVE ME WRONG THEN. ITS RIGHT UP HERE...
IT-- IT CAN'T BE...

A ROBOT?!
ARE YOU SURE, PROFESSOR? THE CIRCUITRY ALMOST LOOKS... ORGANIC.
NO... IT'S DEFINITELY ARTIFICIAL.
THIS IS THE MOST ADVANCED SYSTEM I'VE EVER SEEN! EONS AHEAD OF ANYTHING I'VE DREAMED I--I CAN'T EVEN BEGIN TO PROCESS THIS!


"...I NEED TO GET IT BACK TO THE SHIP!
--I'VE ALMOST FINISHED TYING OFF THE LOOSE CIRCUITS, PROFESSOR. WHATEVER TORE IT APART DID IT WITH LITTLE PRECISION. IT WAS BUTCHERED.
LUCKILY THE TOP HALF WAS ALMOST PERFECTLY PRESERVED. THE COMPUTER IS NEARLY FINISHED CHARTING ITS OPERATING SYSTEM. MY GOD, QUON...IT IS THE MOST INCREDIBLE THING I'VE EVER SEEN!
WHAT WE'VE ALREADY ANALYZED WILL BE A QUANTUM LEAP FOR ROBOTICS. THIS WILL CHANGE EVERYTHING!
YES, BUT I'M MORE CONCERNED ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS FOR OUR PAST, QUON.
THIS MEANS SOMEONE FAR MORE ADVANCED THAN US WAS TRAVELLING THE GALAXY MILLIONS OF YEARS BEFORE WE EVER DID! WHO BUILT THIS AND WHERE ARE THEY NOW?
WELL, MAYBE THE ROBOT WILL HELP ANSWER THOSE QUESTIONS, PROFESSOR. I'M FINISHED STABILIZING THE HARDWARE. DO YOU THINK WE CAN ACTUALLY REBOOT ITS SYSTEM?
THE OPERATING SYSTEM IS DENSE...THE MOST ADVANCED MACHINE CODEX I'VE DEVELOPED HAS AN EIGHT-PRONGED DIGITAL LATTICE. THIS ROBOT'S CODEX HAS FIFTY-SIX!

HAVING SAID THAT, THE MAPPING IS COMPLETE.
I *THINK* I CAN CYCLE IT UP. THERE'S NO WAY OF KNOWING IF ITS ESSENTIAL CIRCUITRY IS STILL ALL ACTIVE. I'M READING A LOT OF DAMAGE.
ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND OUT, PROFESSOR.
YES...HOLD ON MR. QUON... WE ARE ABOUT TO MAKE CONTACT WITH AN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE THAT PRE-DATES ALL CIVILIZATION!
BLEEP
IT DIDN'T--
BE PATIENT BOY! THE COMPUTER IS STILL ACCESSING IT--
--KZZT--
ΔΨΙΞѺ ΨΔѺ ΣѾΔΣΞ
I CAN'T UNDERSTAND IT? WHAT LANGUAGE--
IT MUST BE ANCIENT OSTRAKONIAN! I'M CROSS REFERENCING WITH EVERYTHING THE UGC HAS ON ANCIENT OSTRAKONIAN LANGUAGE AND SETTING A TRANSLATION PROGRAM.

ΣVΔΣΞ ΣVΔΞ BROUGHT THIS ΔЦIΞ UPON YOURSELVES. ЦIΞ NOW YOU WILL **BURN!**

ΔЦIO WERE ΞЦIΞOWARNED! YOU **WERE WARNED!!**

YOU ARE SAFE--PLEASE. THERE IS NO NEED TO BE ALARMED. MY NAME IS PROFESSOR ISAAC SOLOMON FROM AN ORGANIZATION CALLED THE UNITED GALACTIC COUNCIL. WE ARE HERE TO HELP YOU. WE WANT TO REPAIR YOU AND--

WHEN ƎtHΔИ Δt∃? ACCESSING VΛΘΘΦ INFORMATION ЯƎ⅂⅂Δ PRIMITIVEϞΛИϞΛƎV PROCESSING...

I DON'T--

DOCTOR SHOULD WE LET IT ACCESS THE DATA WEB?

WHAT? PLEASE, WE DON'T UNDER-STAND.

OH! SO MUCH TIME HAS ΔRЯ XVΔRϞ⅂XΔ∃

YES. YOU HAVE BEEN ACTIVE FOR--

NO! RϞ⅂XΔ∃ DONE IT AGAIN!

IF THEY SEE ME THEMP COME AGAIN! WE ALL DIE!
THERE A RECKONING! THEM CANNOT HIDE FROM IT
I'M SHUTTING IT DOWN!
PROFESSOR, WAIT!
AND I WAS THEIR EMISSARY! I CANNOT--
NO!
KZZZT
BUT WE WERE JUST GETTING SOMEWHERE!
QUON DID YOU NOT HEAR THAT THING?! THERE IS NO TELLING WHAT IT WAS TALKING ABOUT, BUT UNTIL WE KNOW MORE, WE CAN'T RISK THE SECURITY OF THE UGC!
DON'T BE SUPERSTITIOUS, PROFESSOR! THINK OF WHAT THIS TECHNOLOGY WILL MEAN FOR OUR WORK!
YOU MEAN MY WORK, MR. QUON! DO NOT FORGET YOUR PLACE!

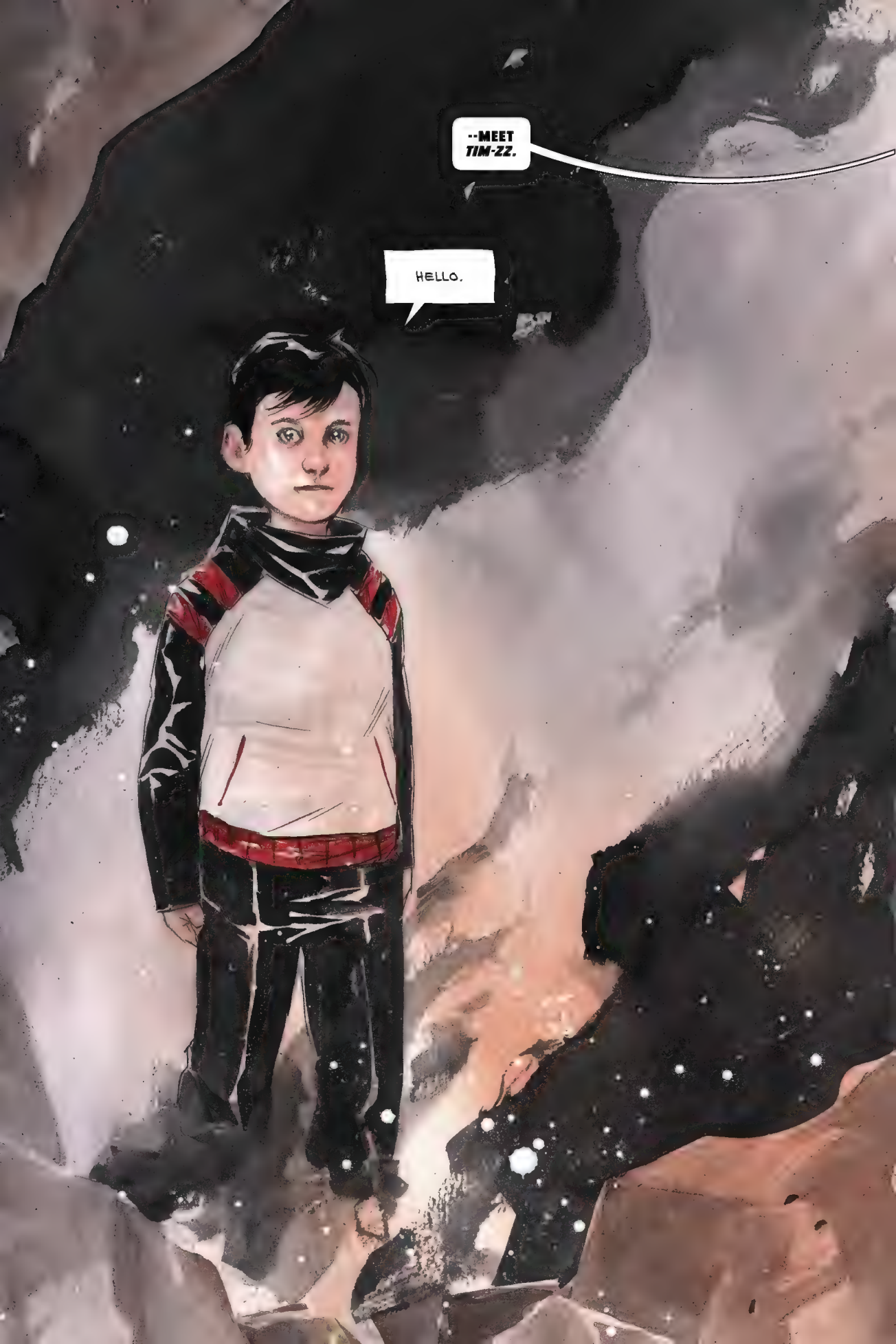
THIS IS MY CALL.
OF COURSE. I'M SORRY, PROFESSOR.
GOOD. NOW THEN, TELL THE PILOTS TO PLOT OUR COURSE BACK TO NIYRATA. WE'LL LEAVE THE DECISION ON WHAT TO DO NEXT TO THE UGC COUNCIL.
I AM EXHAUSTED. CLEAN UP THE LAB AND SEAL THE SPECIMEN FOR TRANSPORT.
YES. OF COURSE, PROFESSOR.
"THAT WAS THE LAST TIME I WOULD EVER SEE PROFESSOR SOLOMON.
"YOU WOULD THINK BETRAYING THE MAN WHO TAUGHT YOU EVERYTHING WOULD BE DIFFICULT.
"YOU WOULD THINK IT WOULD BE A DECISION THAT ONE WOULD TORTURE THEMSELVES OVER FOR DAYS... BUT IT WASN'T.
"IN THE END IT WAS EASY AS SWIPING MY PERSONAL COM OVER THE LAB COMPUTER... RECORDING EVERYTHING WE'D LEARNED ABOUT THE ROBOT.
"AND THAT-- THAT SIMPLE INDISCRETION WAS THE BEGINNING OF EVERYTHING...
"THE BEGINNING OF ALL OF MY WORK..."

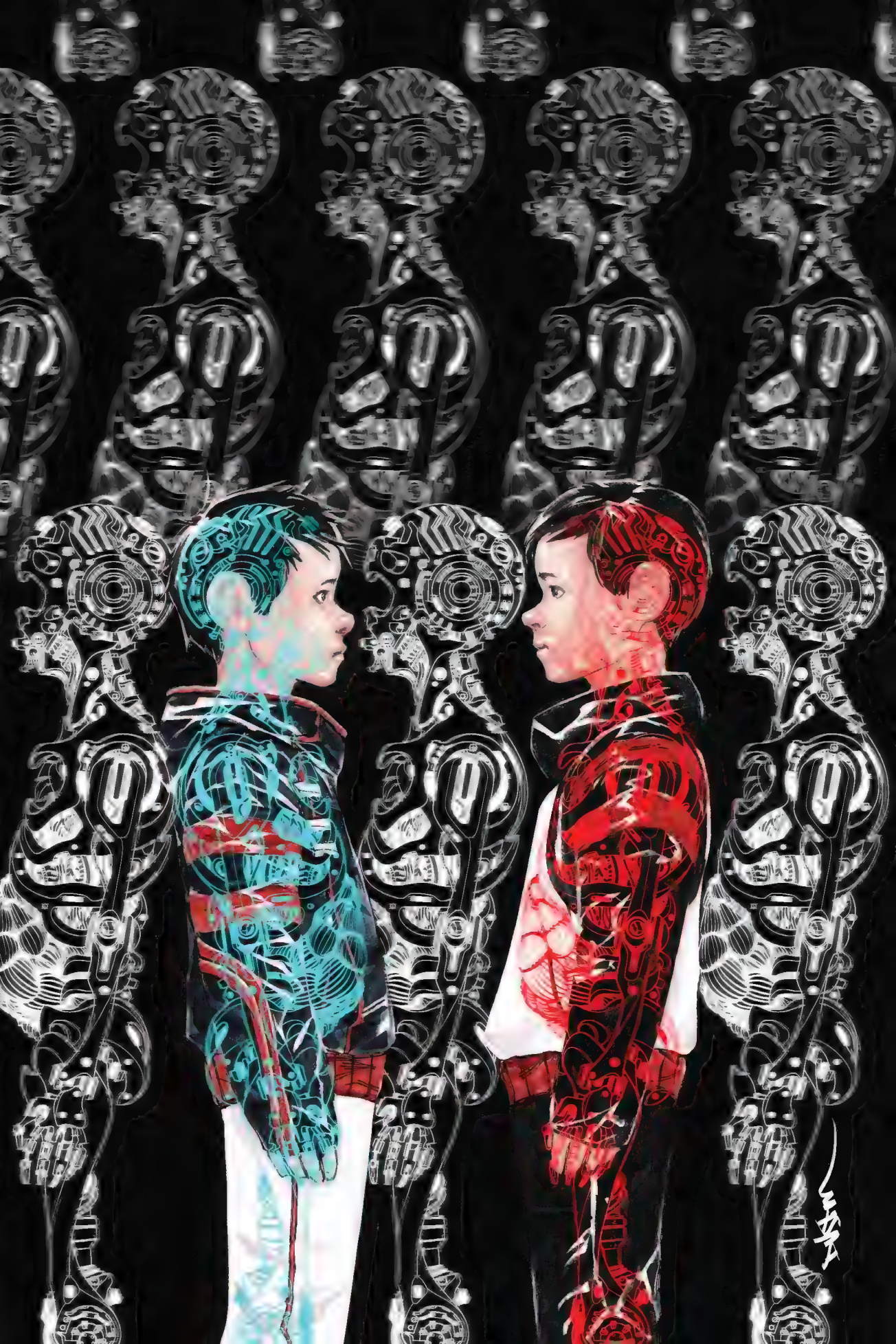
AND THE END OF PROFESSOR SOLOMON.
YOU LYING BASTARD! YOU USED THAT ROBOT TO BUILD YOUR ANDROIDS?! AND THAT--THAT SOMEHOW LED TO THE HARVESTERS!
THERE IS NO PROOF OF ANY CONNECTION--
NO PROOF!
SHUT HER UP!
THIS ROBOT-- THIS SOLOMON WHERE ARE THEY NOW?! WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM?!

I DON'T KNOW. AS SOON AS WE ARRIVED BACK ON NIYRATA I LEFT SOLOMON AND THE ACADEMY. I USED THE DATA FROM THE ROBOT TO CREATE MY OWN ROBOTS...
...THE MOST ADVANCED THE UGC EVER SAW, INCLUDING THE TIM SERIES.
"FAME AND FORTUNE FOLLOWED. I REPLACED SOLOMON AS THE FACE OF ROBOTIC DESIGN IN THE UGC...
"THEN--THEN THE HARVESTERS CAME."
THAT'S ALL I KNOW--PLEASE, MY ARM--HURTS SO BAD--
BAH! HE'S USELESS TO US! A PRETENDER! KILL HIM. THEN START CUTTING THE LITTLE BOT OPEN!
CAPTAIN TELSA! DO SOMETHING!
YES, YOUR MAJESTY.
NO! PLEASE! PLEASE!
CUT HIS VOICE BOX OUT FIRST. I'M TIRED OF HEARING HIM--

THOOM
T-TIM-21?
I--I AM UNHARMED.
W-WHO DARES?!
I DARE, GNISHIAN SCUM...
GHOOOM GHOOM
I AM PSIUS AND WE ARE THE HARDWIRE--THE UNDERGROUND ROBOT RESISTANCE. WE HAVE COME FOR TIM-21.

ME?
YES, LITTLE ONE. WE HAVE TRAVELLED VERY FAR TO FIND YOU...I MUST SAY I NEVER THOUGHT I'D FIND ANOTHER LIKE YOU. YOU LOOK JUST LIKE HIM.
LIKE WHO?
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
TIM-21, MEET MY SON...


--MEET
TIM-ZZ.
HELLO.



A **Fringe World** of the UGC. Once considered a viable candidate for eventual Core World status until the Harvester attacks destroyed the temperature control plants at its poles and Hepton reverted back to its frozen, precolonization climate.

HELLO. MAY I SPEAK TO WHOMEVER IS IN CHARGE HERE?
WHA--?!
WELL? ARE YOU IN CHARGE?
NO ONE'S IN CHARGE. THIS IS A COMMUNE. IT'S--WELL, WE DON'T GET A LOT OF VISITORS HERE.
NO... I SUPPOSE YOU DON'T. PROBABLY THOUGHT NO ONE WOULD EVER *FIND OUT,* RIGHT?
WHAT? I-I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
OH, I THINK YOU UNDERSTAND *PERFECTLY.* NICE CROPS. BUT I DON'T SEE ANY IRRIGATION PIPING? NO FERTILIZATION DISTRIBUTERS?
NOW...TELL ME WHERE *THEY ARE,* OR I START BLOWING HOLES IN YOUR GREENHOUSE SHELL.

TH-THERE.
THANK YOU. YOUR COOPERATION IS GREATLY APPRECIATED, MA'AM.
KnSH

WELL, WELL...WHAT DO WE HAVE HERE?
PLEASE-- WE MEAN NO HARM. WE ONLY WANT TO DO OUR JOB.
YEAH. ME TOO.
WE ARE SIMPLE FARM DROIDS. WE HAVE NO OTHER FUNCTION. WE HAVE NO WEAPON SYSTEMS...NO ALLEGIANCE TO ANY WORLD.
WITHOUT US, THE COMMUNE WILL *NOT* BE ABLE TO SURVIVE. THE UGC HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO RUN SUPPLIES OUT HERE IN YEARS. YOU DON'T NEED TO TELL ANYONE YOU FOUND US HERE.
PLEASE, SIR--*THERE ARE CHILDREN HERE.*

DESCENDER

THE PLANET GNISH.
TIM-21...
Home world of the oldest monarchy in the Megacosm and home of the robot cults.
...MEET MY SON... TIM-22.
AMAZING! I CAN'T BELIEVE ANOTHER TIM SURVIVED!
HELLO, TIM-21. IT IS VERY NICE TO MEET YOU.

HOW THE HELL DID YOU GET THROUGH OUR PLANETARY DEFENSES?!
THAT IS SIMPLE, KING S'NOK OF GNISH...WE INFILTRATED YOUR SECURITY WEB.
IMPOSSIBLE! THAT KIND OF A.I. TECH HASN'T EXISTED SINCE THE HARVESTERS!
OBVIOUSLY, IT DOES.
NOW, WE WILL BE LEAVING, BUT BEFORE WE GO I HAVE DECIDED A WELL-TIMED *POLITICAL ASSASSINATION* WILL FURTHER THE HARDWIRE'S GOALS.
TIM-ZZ...
YES, FATHER.
SHRACK
NO! DON'T--
YOU MANIAC! YOU JUST KILLED THE KING OF GNISH! DO YOU HAVE *ANY CLUE* ABOUT THE KIND OF INSTABILITY YOU'LL BRING TO THE GALAXY?!
OF COURSE I DO. WHY DO YOU THINK I EXECUTED HIM?

KHOOOM

PROTECT TIM-21 AT ALL COSTS!

I'M GOING TO DIE I'M GOING TO DIE I'M GOING TO DIE...

SHUT UP, QUON!

KHOOOM

YOUR MAJESTY?!

WE ARE OUT OF TIME. THE GNISHIANS ARE MOBILIZING. THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE HAS BEEN FORFEIT. TIM-21, WE HAVE COME FOR YOU. THE HARDWIRE NEEDS YOU.

BUT I--

THIS ROBOT IS UNDER THE PROTECTION OF THE UGC! HE IS NOT GOING ANYWHERE EXCEPT WITH ME!

AND WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU WILL BE GOING? THE GNISHIANS WILL NEVER LET YOU GO AFTER YOU HELPED ASSASSINATE THEIR KING.

WHAT?! BUT I NEVER--

TELSA, HE'S RIGHT. WE CAN'T STAY HERE. WE'LL NEVER GET OFF-WORLD ALONE. WE HAVE TO GO WITH THEM!

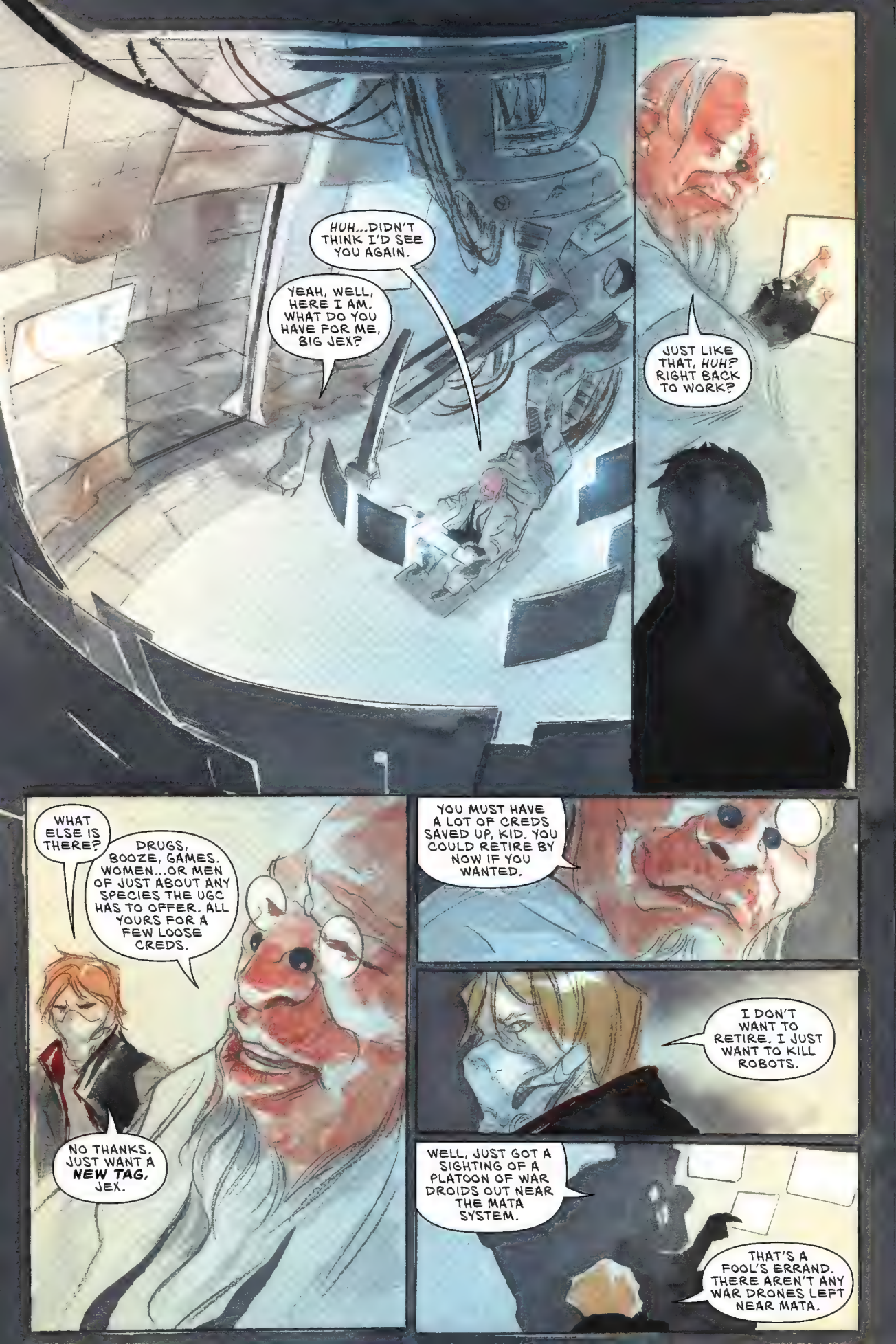
"WE"? YOU HAVE MISUNDERSTOOD. WE ARE TAKING TIM-21 ONLY. YOU ARE NOT WELCOME AMONG THE HARDWIRE.

COME NOW, TIM-21. YOU *BELONG* WITH US. LET US TAKE YOU HOME.

IT WILL BE GREAT! WE CAN BE BROTHERS!

I ALREADY HAVE A BROTHER! HIS NAME IS ANDY, AND CAPTAIN TELSA IS GOING TO HELP ME FIND HIM! I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE WITH YOU!
THOOM
PSIUS, ONE OF OUR CRUISERS HAS BEEN DESTROYED. THE GNISHIANS ARE SCRAMBLING THEIR LAND DEFENSES!
WE MUST LEAVE NOW, TIM-21!
IF YOU STAY HERE, YOU WILL BE DESTROYED LIKE *SO MANY* OF OUR KIND. BUT IF YOU TRUST ME...IF YOU COME WITH US, I WILL SHOW YOU WHAT ROBOTKIND WAS ALWAYS MEANT TO BE!
I DON'T CARE ABOUT ALL THAT. I JUST WANT TO FIND ANDY!
I'M ONLY GOING WITH YOU IF CAPTAIN TELSA AND DR. QUON COME TOO. AND IF YOU HELP US LOOK FOR ANDY!
IT IS FORBIDDEN. CARBON-BASED LIFE FORMS HAVE NEVER SET FOOT ON OUR HOMEWORLD.
WELL, I DON'T GO UNLESS THEY DO!
VERY WELL...BUT WE LEAVE *NOW.*

DILLON'S SCRAP-SAT.
THE OUTER RIM OF THE OSLER SYSTEM.
Scrap-sats, or scrapper satellites, are way stations for scrappers, bounty hunters and the marginal ranks of the UGC.
--I CANNOT BELIEVE YOU TOOK THAT TAG ON HEPTON, KID. YOU REALLY ARE NUTS.
A TAG IS A TAG, MR. M'LOK.
YEAH, MAYBE SO... BUT YOU'RE GETTING A HELL OF A REP GOING AFTER TAGS NO ONE ELSE WILL. I MEAN, ALL THE WAY TO THAT ICE BALL JUST FOR, WHAT, SIX ROBBIES?!
A TAG'S A TAG.
ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT. WHAT WAS IT, EIGHTY THOU?
EIGHTY-FIVE.
HMPH!


HUH...DIDN'T THINK I'D SEE YOU AGAIN.
YEAH, WELL, HERE I AM. WHAT DO YOU HAVE FOR ME, BIG JEX?
JUST LIKE THAT, HUH? RIGHT BACK TO WORK?
WHAT ELSE IS THERE?
DRUGS, BOOZE, GAMES. WOMEN...OR MEN OF JUST ABOUT ANY SPECIES THE UGC HAS TO OFFER. ALL YOURS FOR A FEW LOOSE CREDS.
NO THANKS. JUST WANT A NEW TAG, JEX.
YOU MUST HAVE A LOT OF CREDS SAVED UP, KID. YOU COULD RETIRE BY NOW IF YOU WANTED.
I DON'T WANT TO RETIRE. I JUST WANT TO KILL ROBOTS.
WELL, JUST GOT A SIGHTING OF A PLATOON OF WAR DROIDS OUT NEAR THE MATA SYSTEM.
THAT'S A FOOL'S ERRAND. THERE AREN'T ANY WAR DRONES LEFT NEAR MATA.

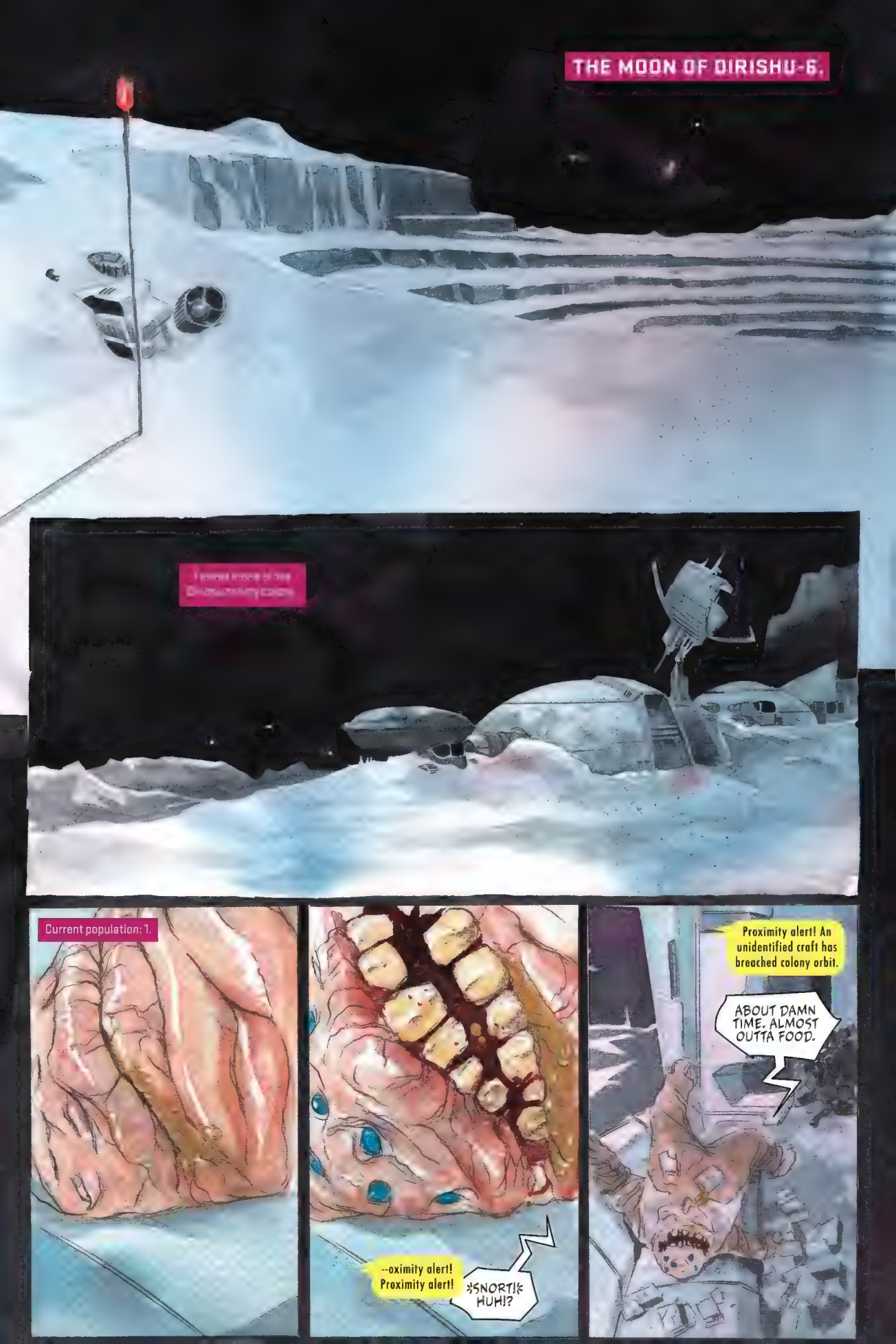
SIGH OKAY... WELL, THINGS HAVE BEEN SLOW. IT AIN'T LIKE IT WAS EVEN TWO YEARS AGO...
...LET'S SEE...
...THREE MAINTENANCE DROIDS ON A SATELLITE AROUND SAMPSON... THAT'S ALREADY BEEN TAGGED, THOUGH...
GOT A REPORT OF A WELDING MECH IN THE RUINS OF STRATA CITY.
NOPE.
HMM... NOTHING NEAR OSTRAKON... HAD THAT UGC ALERT ON DIRISHU, BUT THAT'S TAGGED...
WAIT--WHAT DID YOU SAY?! DIRISHU?!
YEAH, YEAH... SOME HIGH-PRIORITY TARGET THE UGC FLAGGED. BUT THAT WAS A COUPLE DAYS AGO...HAD TO AUCTION THAT ONE OFF. ABE RASTAK AND HIS CREW GOT IT.
IT WAS ONE OF THOSE CREEPY LAST-GEN CHILD COMPANIONS.
JUST ONE BOT. DON'T KNOW WHAT THE BIG DEAL WAS.

I'M TAKING THAT!
DIDN'T YOU HEAR ME?! THAT TAG IS ALREADY TAKEN. ABE AND HIS CREW ARE PROBABLY HALFWAY BACK HERE ALREADY!
HEY!
I DON'T CARE! UNHOOK MY DAMN SHIP!
GEEZ... OKAY, OKAY.
UNHOOK ME! NOW!
UH...YOU'RE ONLY HALF REFILLED. YOU PAID FOR A FULL LOAD.
CHOOOM

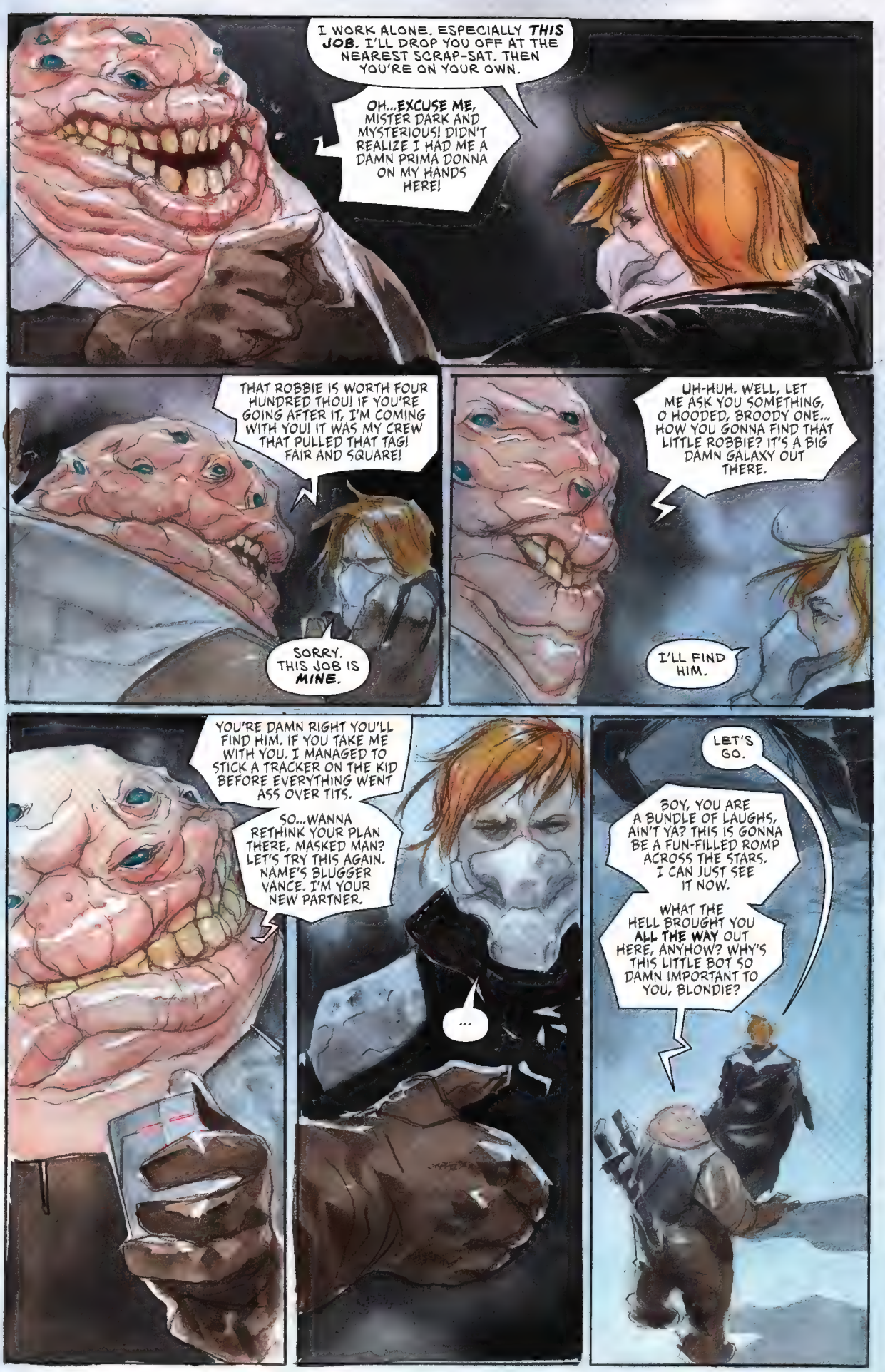
GNISH.
SHIELDS ARE AT TWENTY PERCENT, PSIUS.
AFFIRMATIVE.
UNDOCK US AND RETREAT TO ORBIT.
BUT WHAT ABOUT BANDIT?! AND DRILLER AND MR. TULLIS! WE CAN'T LEAVE THEM!
I AM SORRY, TIM-21, BUT WE CANNOT RISK ANOTHER RESCUE. IF WE DO NOT LEAVE NOW WE WILL ALL BE DESTROYED. AND I CANNOT TAKE THAT CHANCE. YOU ARE TOO IMPORTANT.
BUT--THEY ARE MY FRIENDS.

I AM SORRY. PREPARE TO BREAK ORBIT!
IT'S OKAY, TIM!
NO!
UNDOCKED. PREPARING SHIFT DRIVE.
PLEASE!
HIS EMOTION SETTINGS ARE VERY HIGH, FATHER.
AT LEAST HE HAS EMOTIONS, YOU LITTLE MONSTER.
BANDIT!!

BOOM

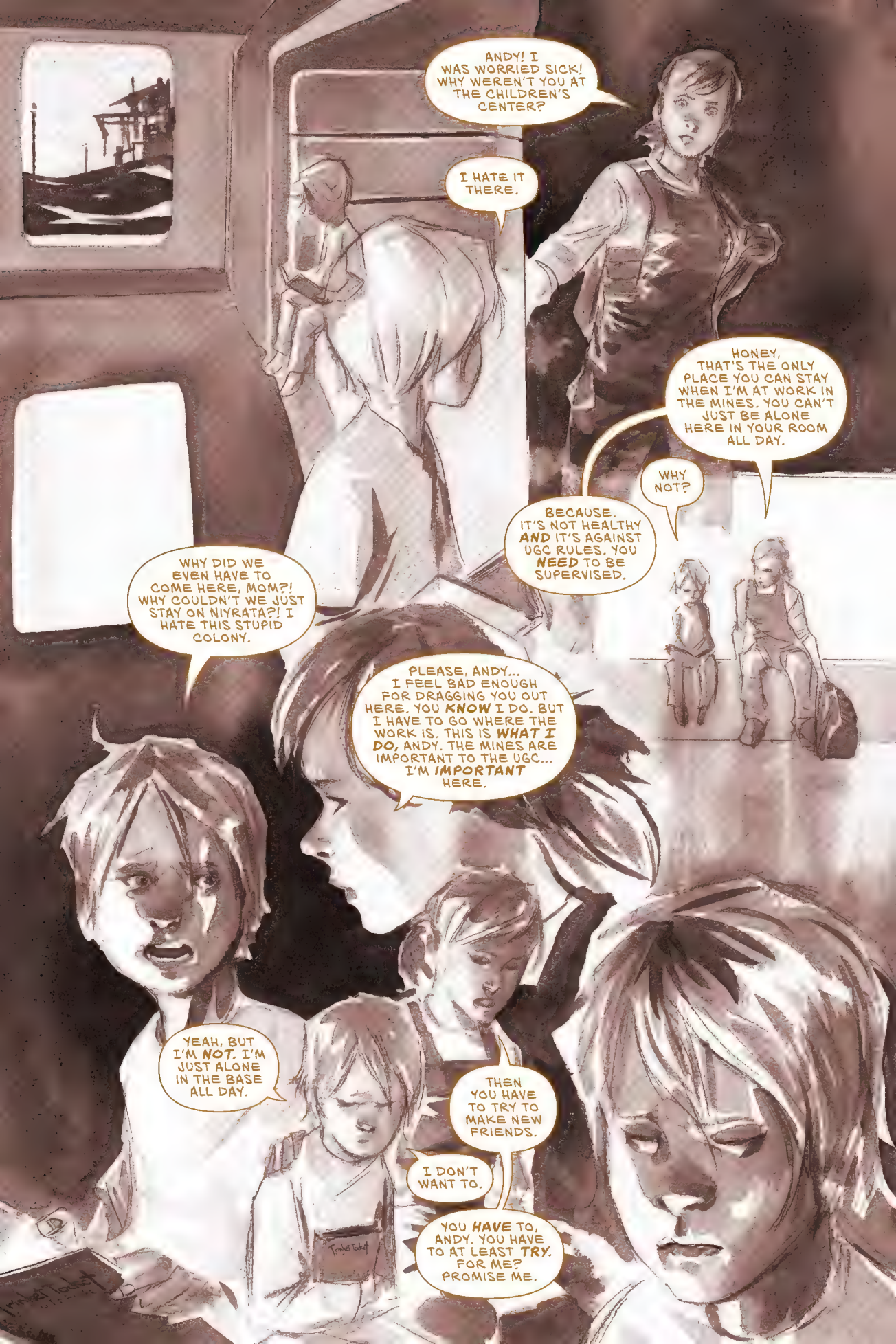

THE MOON OF DIRISHU-6.
Current population: 1.
--oximity alert!
Proximity alert!
SNORT! HUH!?
Proximity alert! An unidentified craft has breached colony orbit.
ABOUT DAMN TIME. ALMOST OUTTA FOOD.

SURE AS SNOT GLAD TO SEE YOU! THOUGHT IT'D BE UGC THAT EVENTUALLY CAME.
NAME'S BLUGGER. BLUGGER VANCE.
WHERE'S THE REST OF YOUR CREW? THE ROBOT?
THAT BOT IS LOOOONG GONE. HIM AND A BIG OLD MINING DROID TORE THROUGH MY WHOLE CREW TWO DAYS AGO. LEFT ME FOR DEAD.
GOOD THING OL' BLUGGER HAS A STRONG CONSTITUTION.
HEY, YOU GOT ANYTHING TO EAT IN YOUR SHIP?
GONE? BUT HOW? THAT ROBOT COULDN'T FLY A SPACECRAFT.
HELL IF I KNOW. I WOKE UP. HE WAS GONE. SIGN OF ANOTHER SHIP HERE TOO. SOMEONE ELSE MUST'VE COME AND GRABBED THEM. IT WAS A HOT TAG. UGC ALERT. ANOTHER SCRAPPER CREW OR MAYBE UGC THEMSELVES.
THEY TORCHED OUR SHIP. WHY THE HELL'D THEY DO A THING LIKE THAT? THOUGHT I MIGHT DIE OUT HERE.
OKAY. THANKS.
"THANKS"?! WHAT, YOU'RE JUST LEAVING?! WHAT ABOUT ME?!

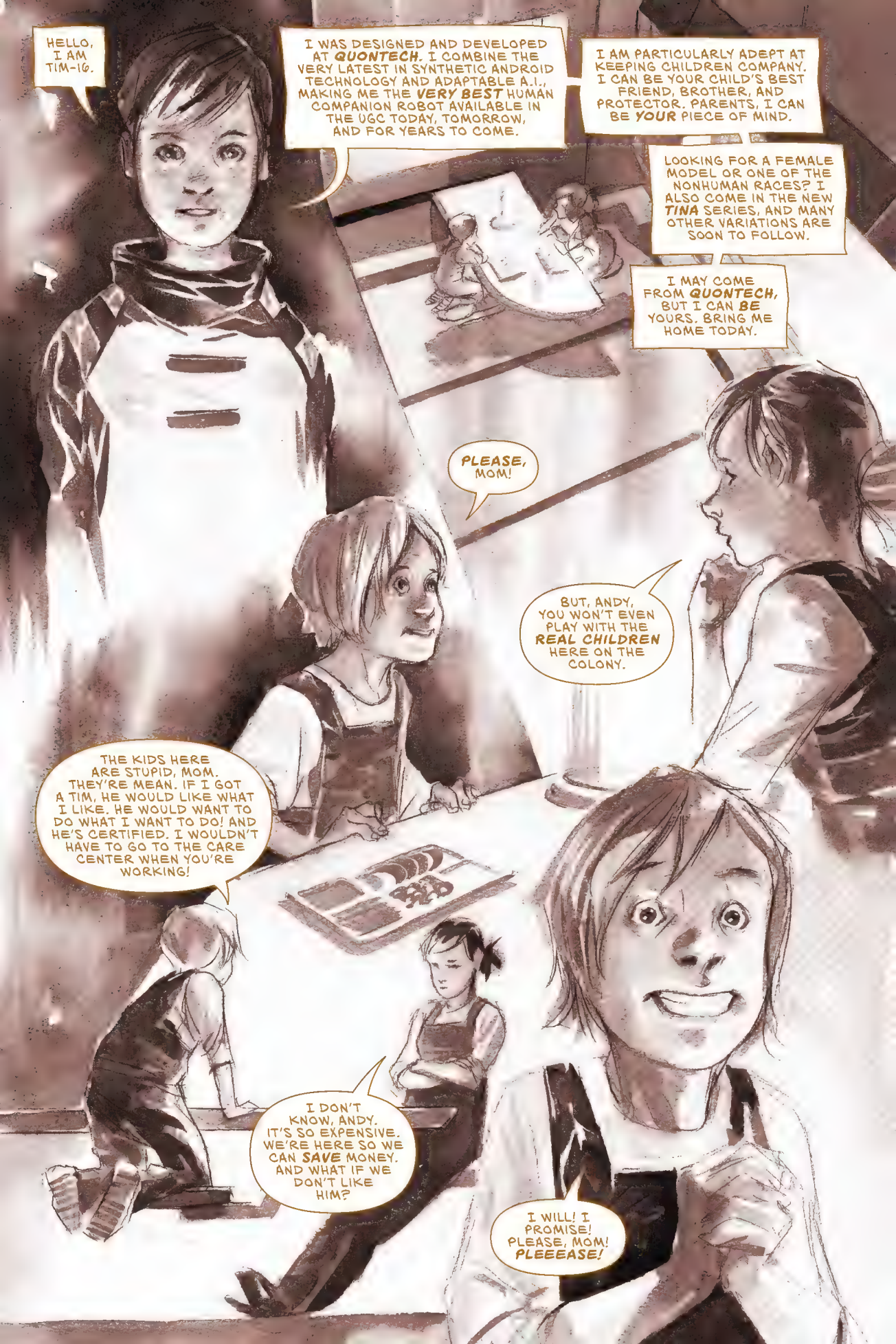

I WORK ALONE. ESPECIALLY THIS JOB. I'LL DROP YOU OFF AT THE NEAREST SCRAP-SAT. THEN YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN.
OH...EXCUSE ME, MISTER DARK AND MYSTERIOUS! DIDN'T REALIZE I HAD ME A DAMN PRIMA DONNA ON MY HANDS HERE!
THAT ROBBIE IS WORTH FOUR HUNDRED THOU! IF YOU'RE GOING AFTER IT, I'M COMING WITH YOU! IT WAS MY CREW THAT PULLED THAT TAG! FAIR AND SQUARE!
SORRY. THIS JOB IS MINE.
UH-HUH. WELL, LET ME ASK YOU SOMETHING, O HOODED, BROODY ONE... HOW YOU GONNA FIND THAT LITTLE ROBBIE? IT'S A BIG DAMN GALAXY OUT THERE.
I'LL FIND HIM.
YOU'RE DAMN RIGHT YOU'LL FIND HIM. IF YOU TAKE ME WITH YOU. I MANAGED TO STICK A TRACKER ON THE KID BEFORE EVERYTHING WENT ASS OVER TITS.
SO...WANNA RETHINK YOUR PLAN THERE, MASKED MAN? LET'S TRY THIS AGAIN. NAME'S BLUGGER VANCE. I'M YOUR NEW PARTNER.
...
LET'S GO.
BOY, YOU ARE A BUNDLE OF LAUGHS, AIN'T YA? THIS IS GONNA BE A FUN-FILLED ROMP ACROSS THE STARS. I CAN JUST SEE IT NOW.
WHAT THE HELL BROUGHT YOU ALL THE WAY OUT HERE, ANYHOW? WHY'S THIS LITTLE BOT SO DAMN IMPORTANT TO YOU, BLONDIE?

MY NAME'S NOT BLONDIE. IT'S ANDY.
I USED TO LIVE HERE. AND THAT LITTLE BOT...HE USED TO BE MY BROTHER.

THE OUTER FRINGES OF THE GNISHIAN SYSTEM.
BRRAAAP!
DO YOU EVER STOP EATING, BLUGGER?
DO YOU EVER STOP SULKING?
NO.
WELL, ME NEITHER, THEN.
THIS PIECE OF SCRAP GOT A NAME?
WHAT?
YOUR SHIP? YOU NAMED IT, DIDN'T YOU? EVERY SHIP NEEDS A NAME.
NOT EVERY SHIP.
BOY, YOU ARE A REAL STICK IN THE CRUD, ANDY MY MAN.
YOU DON'T LIKE BEING AROUND PEOPLE MUCH, DO YA?


ANDY! I WAS WORRIED SICK! WHY WEREN'T YOU AT THE CHILDREN'S CENTER?
I HATE IT THERE.
HONEY, THAT'S THE ONLY PLACE YOU CAN STAY WHEN I'M AT WORK IN THE MINES. YOU CAN'T JUST BE ALONE HERE IN YOUR ROOM ALL DAY.
WHY NOT?
BECAUSE. IT'S NOT HEALTHY AND IT'S AGAINST UGC RULES. YOU NEED TO BE SUPERVISED.
WHY DID WE EVEN HAVE TO COME HERE, MOM?! WHY COULDN'T WE JUST STAY ON NIYRATA?! I HATE THIS STUPID COLONY.
PLEASE, ANDY... I FEEL BAD ENOUGH FOR DRAGGING YOU OUT HERE. YOU KNOW I DO. BUT I HAVE TO GO WHERE THE WORK IS. THIS IS WHAT I DO, ANDY. THE MINES ARE IMPORTANT TO THE UGC... I'M IMPORTANT HERE.
YEAH, BUT I'M NOT. I'M JUST ALONE IN THE BASE ALL DAY.
THEN YOU HAVE TO TRY TO MAKE NEW FRIENDS.
I DON'T WANT TO.
YOU HAVE TO, ANDY. YOU HAVE TO AT LEAST TRY. FOR ME? PROMISE ME.
Trinket Ticket

--SCRAP DOG! NO, WAIT...I THINK THERE'S ALREADY AT LEAST THREE OTHER SHIPS CALLED THE SCRAP DOG. HOW ABOUT? WAR FANG? COMET CRUSHER? DEATH FLOWER? BATTLE BANSHEE? THE IMPERIAL SCORPION? SPACE DAGGER?
OHH--I LIKE THAT! THE SPACE DAGGER!
WOULD YOU PLEASE SHUT UP...
...WE'VE GOT COMPANY!
WHAT'S GOING ON? SCAN MY ONBOARD. I'M REGISTERED.
WE ALREADY DID. IT DOESN'T MATTER. THIS IS AS FAR AS YOU GO, SCRAPPER.
SINCE THE ASSASSINATION, GNISHIAN SPACE IS OFF LIMITS TO EVERYONE. REGISTERED OR NOT. NO ONE GOES IN OR OUT.
ASSASSINATION?
WHERE'VE YOU BEEN?! THE HARDWIRE GOT KING S'NOK. GNISH HAS BROKEN OFF ALL CONTACT WITH THE UGC. WE ARE ON THE BRINK OF WAR.
DAMN IT. I DON'T CARE WHAT'S HAPPENED TO S'NOK. I AM GOING TO GNISH, BLUGGER. I WANT THAT BOT.
IF IT REALLY WAS THE HARDWIRE THERE MAY BE...THERE MAY BE MORE THAN JUST ONE LITTLE ROBBIE AT THE END OF THE TRAIL. WHAT ARE YOU THINKING, BLONDIE?
I'M THINKING IT'S GOING TO TAKE MORE THAN TWO UGC FIGHTERS TO STOP THE SPACE DAGGER. YOU IN?
HEH HEH. LET'S GET IN SOME TROUBLE, KID.


HELLO, I AM TIM-16.
I WAS DESIGNED AND DEVELOPED AT QUONTECH. I COMBINE THE VERY LATEST IN SYNTHETIC ANDROID TECHNOLOGY AND ADAPTABLE A.I., MAKING ME THE VERY BEST HUMAN COMPANION ROBOT AVAILABLE IN THE UGC TODAY, TOMORROW, AND FOR YEARS TO COME.
I AM PARTICULARLY ADEPT AT KEEPING CHILDREN COMPANY. I CAN BE YOUR CHILD'S BEST FRIEND, BROTHER, AND PROTECTOR. PARENTS, I CAN BE YOUR PIECE OF MIND.
LOOKING FOR A FEMALE MODEL OR ONE OF THE NONHUMAN RACES? I ALSO COME IN THE NEW TINA SERIES, AND MANY OTHER VARIATIONS ARE SOON TO FOLLOW.
I MAY COME FROM QUONTECH, BUT I CAN BE YOURS. BRING ME HOME TODAY.
PLEASE, MOM!
BUT, ANDY, YOU WON'T EVEN PLAY WITH THE REAL CHILDREN HERE ON THE COLONY.
THE KIDS HERE ARE STUPID, MOM. THEY'RE MEAN. IF I GOT A TIM, HE WOULD LIKE WHAT I LIKE. HE WOULD WANT TO DO WHAT I WANT TO DO! AND HE'S CERTIFIED. I WOULDN'T HAVE TO GO TO THE CARE CENTER WHEN YOU'RE WORKING!
I DON'T KNOW, ANDY. IT'S SO EXPENSIVE. WE'RE HERE SO WE CAN SAVE MONEY. AND WHAT IF WE DON'T LIKE HIM?
I WILL! I PROMISE! PLEASE, MOM! PLEEEASE!

WOO-HOO!
THOOM
WHERE DID YOU LEARN TO SHOOT LIKE THAT, BLUGGER?
UGC FLIGHT ACADEMY.
WHAT?! YOU WERE UGC?!
CHOOM CHOOOM CHOOM
I'M MORE THAN JUST A PRETTY FACE, BLONDIE.
OH SHIT!
RELAX, I ALMOST GOT HIM.
IT'S NOT JUST HIM...
SHIFTHOLE JUST OPENED UP! IT'S AN ENTIRE SQUADRON!

NOW, MOM?
HOLD ON, HOLD ON! THE SHIP HASN'T EVEN FINISHED LANDING YET!
DO YOU THINK HE'S EXCITED TOO, MOM?
I BET HE IS, ANDY.
A.Tavers
MOM! THERE HE IS!
HELLO, ANDY TAVERS, MRS. TAVERS. I AM TIM-21.
ANDY, SLOW DOWN! DON'T RUN!

CHOOOM CHOOM
IS THAT AS FAST AS YOU CAN GO, ANDY?!
YOU WANNA DRIVE?!
I SHOOT, YOU DRIVE. JUST DRIVE BETTER!
CHOOM CHOOM
SHOOT BETTER!
THERE!
GNISH?! THEY CAN'T ENTER GNISHIAN SPACE, BUT IT'S STILL TOO FAR. THEY'LL GUN US DOWN LONG BEFORE WE GET THERE.
NOT GNISH-- PHAGES! WE CAN REACH THE PLANET PHAGES! THEY'LL NEVER FOLLOW US THERE.
ARE YOU CRAZY?! PHAGES IS HAUNTED!
NOTHING IS HAUNTED. BESIDES, WE'RE NOT GOING ALL THE WAY DOWN...JUST SKIMMING THE PLANET'S RINGS.
HOLD ON, HERE WE GO!

HELLO?

ANDY?

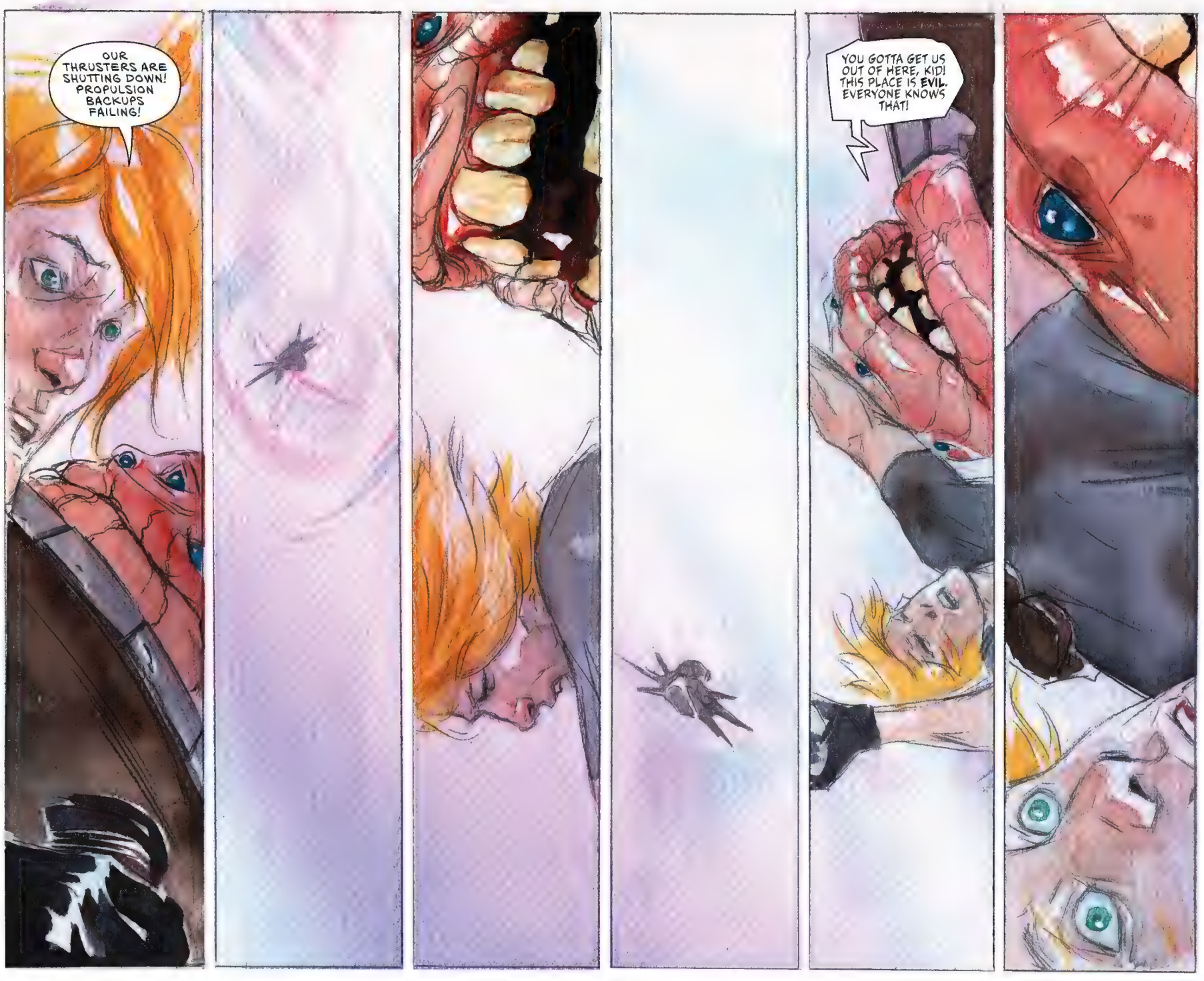
DID I SCARE YOU, TIM?

I DON'T REALLY GET SCARED, ANDY. MY SENSORS DETECTED YOU POINT-SIX SECONDS BEFORE YOU SAID "BOO."

WHAT'S THE POINT OF PLAYING HIDE AND SCARE IF YOU CAN'T GET SCARED?

TIM? WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

SOMETHING'S WRONG!


OUR THRUSTERS ARE SHUTTING DOWN! PROPULSION BACKUPS FAILING!
YOU GOTTA GET US OUT OF HERE, KID! THIS PLACE IS **EVIL**. EVERYONE KNOWS THAT!

ANDY!
ANDY! GET UP! WE HAVE TO GO! NOW!
MOM--?!
NOW, ANDY! THERE'S NO TIME!
MOMMY WHAT'S--
I DON'T KNOW! NO ONE DOES! SOMETHING TERRIBLE HAS HAPPENED. WE HAVE TO LEAVE NOW! THE SHUTTLES ARE ALREADY TAKING OFF! HURRY!
WHAT ABOUT TIM?!
WE CAN'T TAKE HIM! THERE'S NOT ENOUGH ROOM ON THE SHUTTLES!
NO! TIM!
NO, ANDY!
TIM!

...IT CAN'T BE.

...IT CAN'T BE.
IT CAN'T BE REAL.
MOM! WHAT--WHAT IS THAT!?
WE DON'T KNOW! SOME SORT OF MACHINES ARE ATTACKING THE UGC. NIYRATA IS IN TROUBLE. WE'VE LOST ALL CONTACT AND NOW THERE ARE REPORTS OF SOME KIND OF LEAK IN THE MINES! WE HAVE TO HURRY!

IT CAN'T BE REAL. THE SPECTRAL CITY... I THOUGHT IT WAS JUST A MYTH!
THAT AIN'T NO MYTH, KID.
D-DON'T MOVE, BLUGGER.
WHAT'S IT DOING?
I-I DON'T--
--KK!

HURRY, ANDY, THIS IS THE LAST SHUTTLE!

NOW, ANDY... I AM GOING TO NEED YOU TO BE VERY BRAVE FOR ME.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

THERE'S NOT ENOUGH ROOM ON THE SHUTTLE TO FIT EVERYONE, ANDY. AND I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO MIGHT BE ABLE TO STOP THE LEAK IN THE MINES.

THERE ARE STILL HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE HERE, ANDY. IF I CAN SAVE THEM--

WHAT DO YOU... NO!

NO!

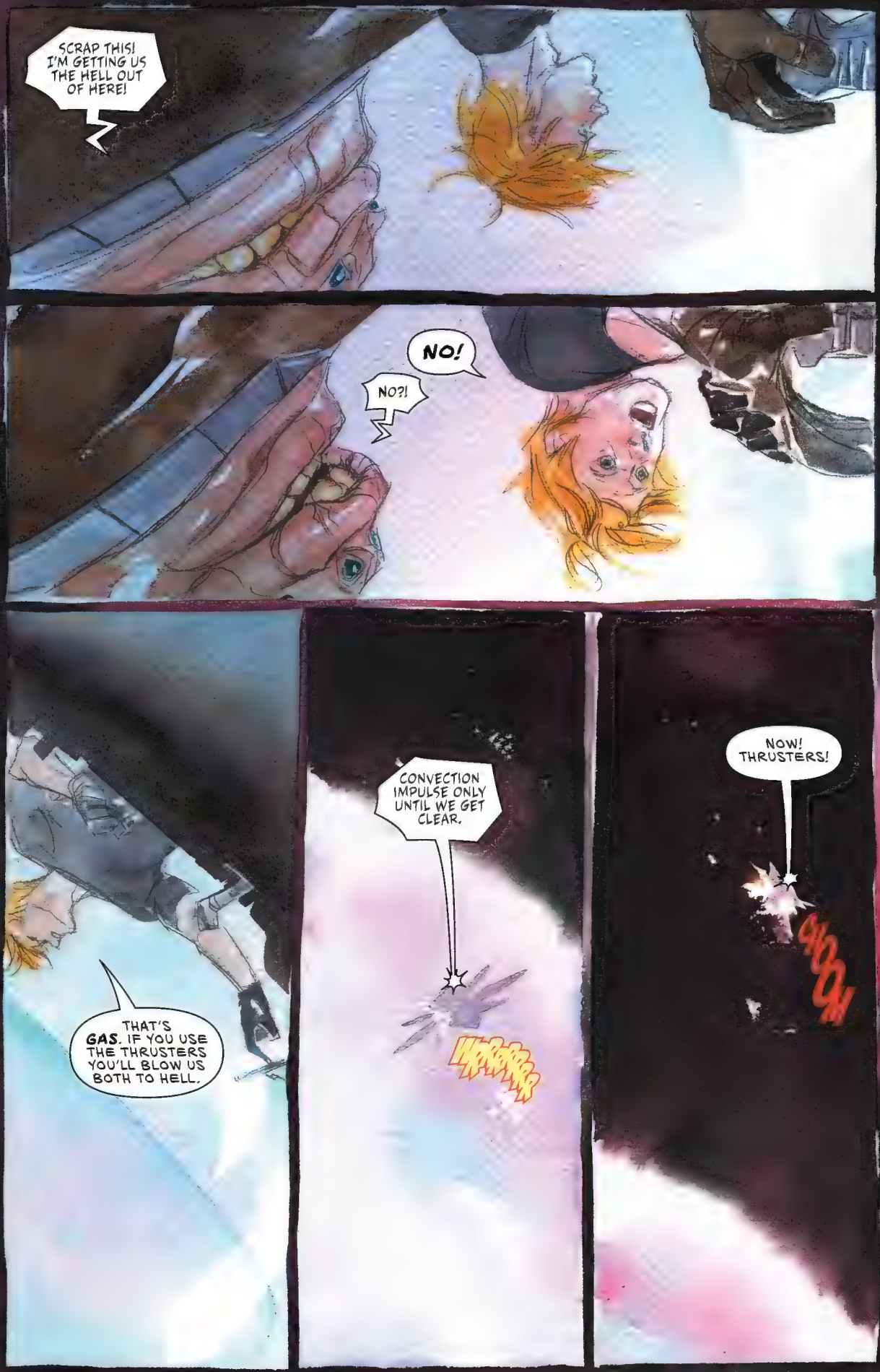
I'M SORRY, ANDY...I LOVE YOU. NO MATTER WHAT, I LOVE YOU!

NO! MOMMY, NO!

...NO MATTER WHAT.

AHH! AHH!

--UNGH!
THE SHIP'S POWER IS BACK UP!
I--
WHAT THE HELL DID THAT THING DO TO YOU, KID?
I-I CAN'T. I SAW--

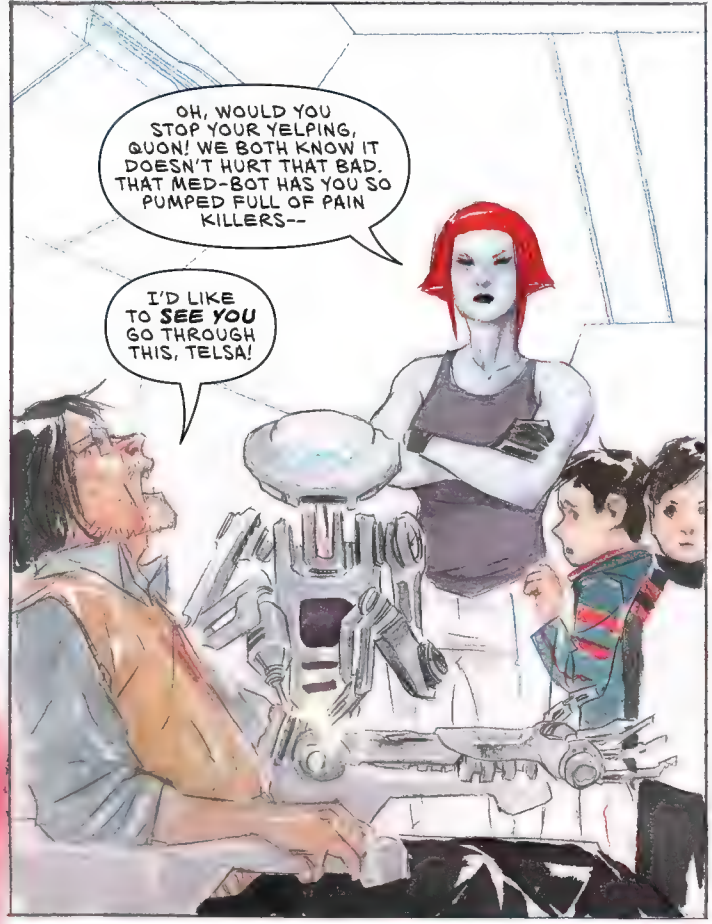

SCRAP THIS! I'M GETTING US THE HELL OUT OF HERE!
NO!
NO?!
THAT'S GAS. IF YOU USE THE THRUSTERS YOU'LL BLOW US BOTH TO HELL.
CONVECTION IMPULSE ONLY UNTIL WE GET CLEAR.
NOW! THRUSTERS!
KHOOM

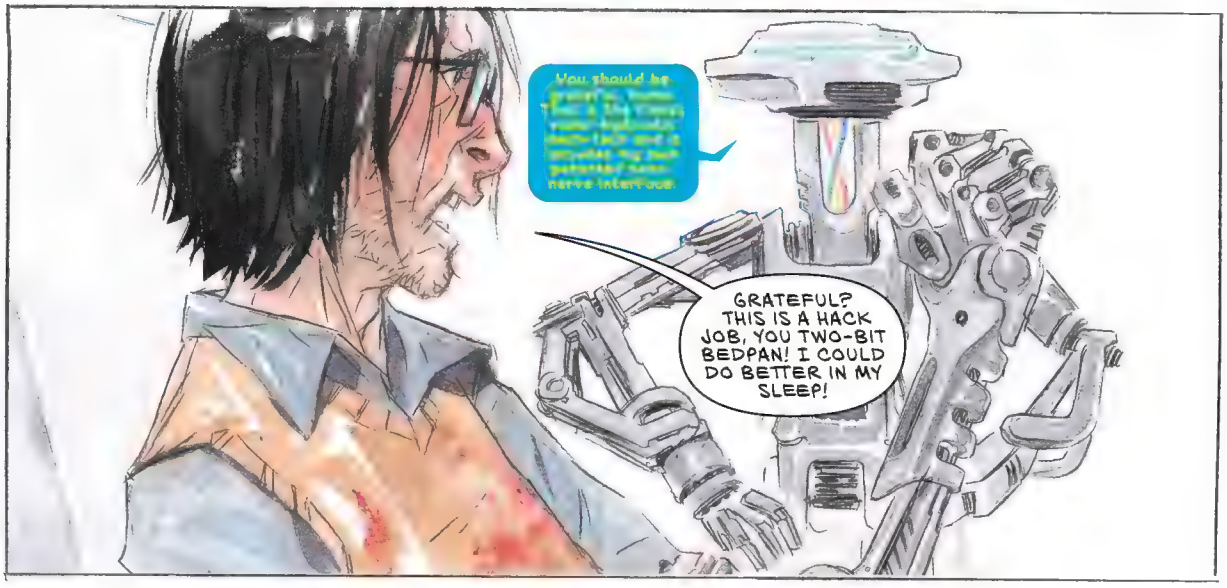
THE UGC SQUADRON IS LONG GONE. WE DITCHED THEM.
WHAT THE HELL HAPPENED DOWN THERE?
I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT.
I JUST WANT TO FIND TI--
I JUST WANT TO FIND THAT ROBOT.
P.Tavel
...NO MATTER WHAT.

SHIFTSPACE.

A network of wormholes used for faster-than-light space travel.

The **COMMAND FLEET** of **THE HARDWIRE:** The underground robot resistance.


OH, WOULD YOU STOP YOUR YELPING, QUON! WE BOTH KNOW IT DOESN'T HURT THAT BAD. THAT MED-BOT HAS YOU SO PUMPED FULL OF PAIN KILLERS--
I'D LIKE TO SEE YOU GO THROUGH THIS, TELSA!


You should be grateful to Telsa. She's the closest thing to a mechanic we've got and it wouldn't be her patented nerve interface.
GRATEFUL? THIS IS A HACK JOB, YOU TWO-BIT BEDPAN! I COULD DO BETTER IN MY SLEEP!

WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?

BANDIT AND DRILLER...WE JUST LEFT THEM BEHIND.

TIM, I THINK YOU NEED TO ADJUST YOUR EMOTION SETTINGS. WE'RE IN ENOUGH TROUBLE AS IT IS. I CAN'T HANDLE YOU MOPING AROUND TOO!

BANDIT WAS MY ***BEST FRIEND!*** AND I CAN'T JUST ***ADJUST*** MY EMOTION SETTINGS. THEY ARE ADAPTIVE. I LEARN FROM THOSE AROUND ME! ***THIS IS WHO I AM, CAPTAIN TELSA!***

SWIP

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

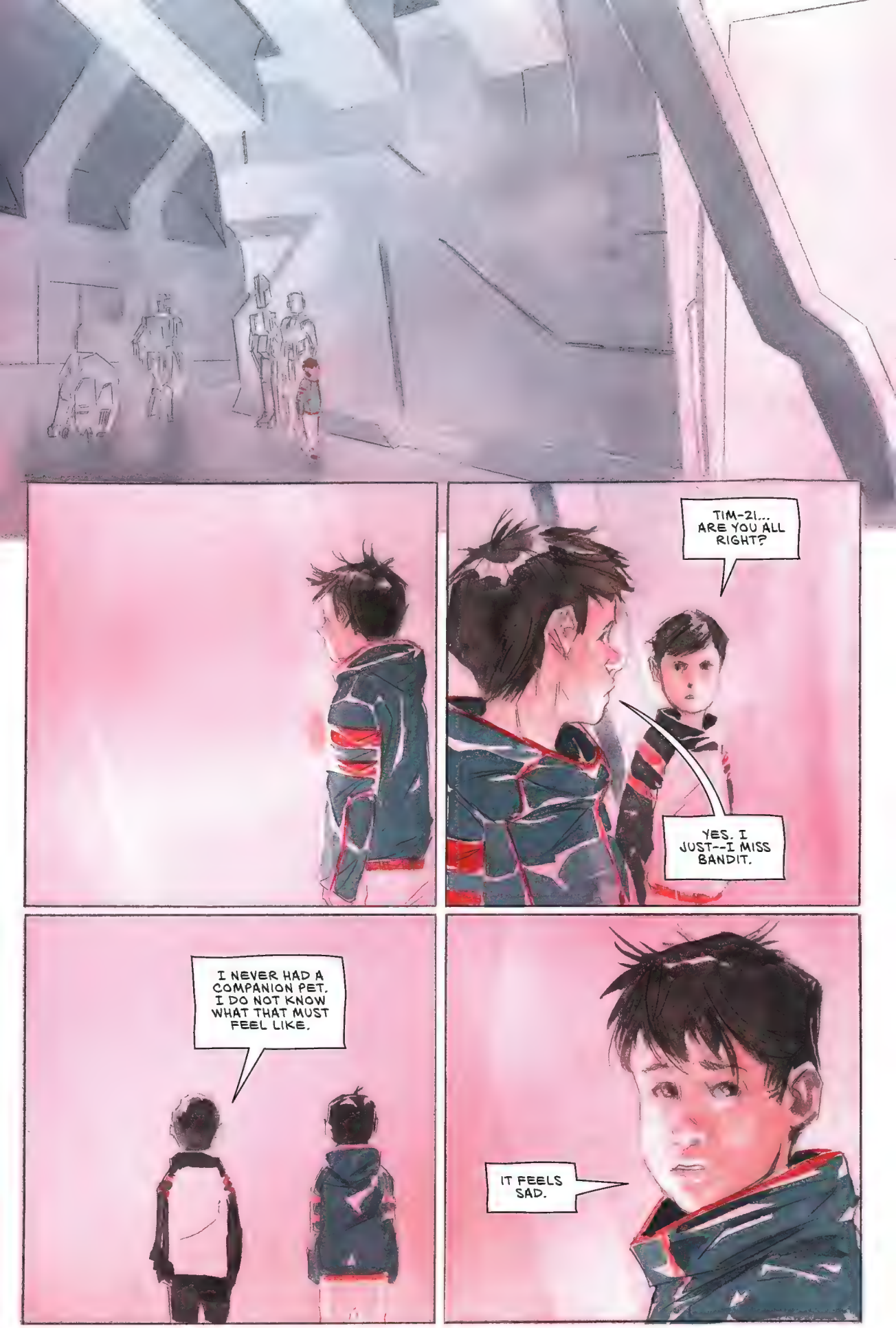
TO BE ALONE.

BUT WE DON'T EVEN KNOW THE SHIP--

I'LL GO WITH HIM.

I WOULDN'T WORRY, TELSA...IF TIM SPENDS MUCH MORE TIME AROUND ***YOU,*** I'D SAY HIS EMOTION SETTINGS WILL ***DROP SIGNIFICANTLY.***

YOU WANNA FIND OUT IF THEY HAVE ***ANY MORE*** REPLACEMENT BODY PARTS AROUND HERE, QUON?


TIM-21... ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
YES. I JUST--I MISS BANDIT.
I NEVER HAD A COMPANION PET. I DO NOT KNOW WHAT THAT MUST FEEL LIKE.
IT FEELS SAD.

DO YOU--DO YOU EVER WISH THAT WE WERE NOT MADE SO HUMAN-LIKE? THAT WE COULDN'T FEEL THINGS LIKE THEY DO? THAT WE COULD JUST BE NORMAL ROBOTS?
BUT OUR EMPATHY IS WHAT MAKES US SO SPECIAL, TIM-21. IT IS WHY THE TIM SERIES WAS CREATED IN THE FIRST PLACE.
IF PSIUS TEACHES US ANYTHING IN THE HARDWIRE, IT IS TO BE PROUD OF OUR FUNCTION. TO EMBRACE OUR PROGRAMMING.
WHAT WAS YOUR ASSIGNMENT, TIM-22? WHO WAS YOUR COMPANION BEFORE THE HARVESTERS CAME?
I WAS ASSIGNED TO AN ELDERLY MAN ON NIYRATA. I GAVE HIM HIS MEALS AND HIS MEDICATION AND HELPED HIM GET AROUND.
HE TOLD ME--HE TOLD ME I REMINDED HIM OF HIS SON. HIS OWN SON...HIS HUMAN SON WAS GROWN AND WAS AN AMBASSADOR ON SAMPSON. HE RARELY VISITED HIS FATHER.
IT IS FUNNY HOW HUMANS DO NOT CARE FOR THEIR ELDERLY. I THINK IF THEY COULD DISCARD THEM ONCE THEY BECAME FAULTY, THE WAY THEY DISCARD US, THEY WOULD.
THEY MEAN WELL. TELSA PROMISED ME SHE WOULD HELP ME FIND MY HUMAN BROTHER, ANDY, IF HE IS STILL ALIVE.
SHE MAY BE LACKING IN CERTAIN SOCIAL GRACES...BUT I DO TRUST HER.

I THINK MAYBE WE SHOULD TRY TO WEAR CLOTHING THAT IS A BIT LESS ALIKE, OR THEY MAY CONFUSE US FOR ONE ANOTHER, TIM-22.
HMM... I COULD ACCESS MY GROOMING SETTINGS...
HOW IS THIS? BETTER?
HA!
OR MAYBE RED? RED WAS PROGRAMMED AS MY FAVORITE COLOR.
YES, MINE AS WELL. BUT ANDY'S WAS BLUE. SO NOW MINE IS BLUE TOO. I--I MISS BANDIT AND ANDY.
I KNOW. BUT IT'S GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT, TIM-21.
I PROMISE.

THE PLANET GNISH.

Home world of The Scrappers and the only monarchy in the OGC.

KING S'NOK MEANT SO MUCH TO SO MANY OF US, AND HIS DEATH IS A HUGE LOSS FOR OUR BELOVED PLANET GNISH AND FOR THE ENTIRE GALAXY...
BUT TODAY IS NOT A DAY OF MOURNING. WE ARE HERE TO CELEBRATE. FOR WITH THE LOSS OF ONE KING... WE NOW PREPARE TO WELCOME HIS SUCCESSOR.
WITHOUT FURTHER ADO... LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, PLEASE JOIN ME IN WELCOMING THE NEXT KING OF GNISH...
--HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS TO BE...PRINCE S'LOK, SON OF S'NOK!
PRINCE S'LOK...WILL YOU PLEASE APPROACH THE PODIUM.
OF COURSE, HONORABLE SPEAKER OF THE THRONE.

PRINCE S'LOK... DO YOU ACCEPT THE THRONE OF GNISH AND PLEDGE TO LEAD OUR PLANET AND OUR PEOPLE UNTIL YOUR FINAL BREATH?
I DO, LORD SPEAKER.
THEN IT IS MY PRIVILEGE TO PRESENT YOU WITH THIS...YOUR BELOVED FATHER'S HAIRPIECE. IT HAS ADORNED THE HEADS OF YOUR FAMILY FOR GENERATIONS. WILL YOU ACCEPT IT NOW UPON YOUR OWN HEAD...AND WITH IT ALL THE RESPONSIBILITY AND BURDEN OF THE THRONE?
I--I DO.
THEN I CALL YOU PRINCE NO MORE! FROM THIS DAY FORTH YOU SHALL BE KING S'LOK OF GNISH!
AND IT IS HERE THAT I MAKE MY FIRST PLEDGE TO YOU, MY PEOPLE--I SHALL USE ALL OF OUR MIGHT TO HUNT DOWN AND DESTROY THE VILE MACHINES WHO SLEW MY FATHER!
I AM HEREBY DOUBLING ALL BOUNTIES ON ROBOTS AND ANDROIDS! AND GENEROUS REWARDS SHALL BE GIVEN TO ANYONE WHO CAN HELP LEAD THE GNISHIAN MILITARY TO THE SECRET WHEREABOUTS OF THE ROBOT RESISTANCE!
THE MACHINE AGE IS OVER! AND IF THE UGC OR ANYONE ELSE STANDS IN OUR WAY--
--THEY TOO WILL FALL UPON GNISHIAN SWORDS!
MORE THAN ENOUGH, BLUGGER.
HEY, KID. YOU SEEN ENOUGH OF THIS CRAP YET?
GOOD. 'CAUSE I DID SOME DIGGING, AND THINK I GOT US A LEAD ON OUR MISSING BOT.

--BRING IT ON, BIG BOY!
RRRRRRRRRR
RRRRRRRRRR
RRRRRRRRRR
WHAT'S THE PLAN, DRILLER?
HRRM. THE PLAN IS YOU DUCK, HRRMAN.
I SAID DUCK!
BOOM

RRRRRRRRRRR

--BZZZXXKTZZ!!

THOOM

CRASH

HRRM...

SMASH

DRILLER A KILLER!

DRILLER A REAL KILLER!!!

WHAT IS IT?
WHAT'RE YOU BARKING ABOUT NOW, YAPPY-BOT?
ARF! ARF!
JUST MORE STINKIN' HRRMANS. WE ALREADY FOUGHT TODAY. LEAVE US ALONE!
BANDIT!
ARF!
YOU KNOW THAT LITTLE THING? IT WAS WITH THE BOY-BOT ON DIRISHU.
I--HE WAS MY DOG. OUR DOG...TIM AND MINE.
ARF! ARF!
YOU OKAY, KID?
OF COURSE. JUST A SILLY TOY. NOT WORTH ITS WEIGHT IN SCRAP.

YOU'RE UGC. WHY ARE YOU WITH THESE BOTS?
WHAT'S IT TO YOU, SCRAP DOG?
YOU WANNA START CALLING ME NAMES TOO, LITTLE MAN? I'LL EAT YOUR FRIGGIN' HEAD. ANSWER HIM!
RRR!
MAYBE YOU TELL US HOW YOU CAME TO BE WITH THIS BOT AND WHERE HIS COMPANION WENT, AND WE SEE ABOUT GETTING YOU OUT OF THAT CELL?
I DON'T CUT DEALS WITH SCRAPPERS.
RRR!
LOOK...I'M SEARCHING FOR TIM-21. I KNEW HIM, A LONG TIME AGO. HE WAS MY COMPANION.
WAIT--YOU'RE ANDY?
HOW DO YOU KNOW MY NAME?
TIM-21. HE TOLD US ABOUT YOU. HE WANTED US TO HELP FIND YOU IF YOU WERE STILL ALIVE.

THEY TOOK TIM-21 TO THE PALACE, ALONG WITH MY COMMANDING OFFICER. BUT THERE WAS A TERRORIST STRIKE OR SOMETHING.

NEWSFEEDS ARE SAYING IT WAS THE HARDWIRE. THEY KILLED S'NOK. CHANCES ARE THEY TOOK THE BOT TOO. REPORTS SAID THEY TOOK A HUMAN, A SAMPSONITE, AND A ROBOT IN THE RAID.

A SAMPSONITE-- TELSA! WELL, THAT'S IT, THEN. WE'LL NEVER SEE THEM AGAIN. THE UGC HAS BEEN LOOKING FOR THE HARDWIRE FOR YEARS. ***NO ONE*** KNOWS WHERE THEY ARE.

HOLD ON... BANDIT WAS TIM'S DOG-BOT, THEY WERE CHIP-CONNECTED SO BANDIT COULDN'T GET LOST IN THE MINES.

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, KID?

I'M ***SAYING,*** IF THE TRACKER CHIP CAN BE REVERSED, BANDIT CAN LEAD US RIGHT TO THE HARDWIRE AND TO TIM-21.

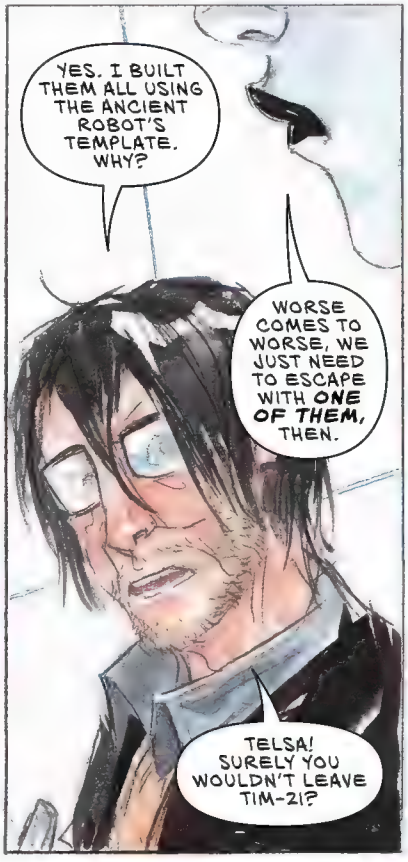
YOU KNOW HOW TO DO ALL THAT TECHY STUFF, KID?

NO... BUT MY ***EX-WIFE*** DOES.

DO YOU THINK WE CAN REALLY TRUST THIS PSIUS? I'VE HEARD OF SOME OF THE GUERRILLA ATTACKS THAT HAVE BEEN ATTRIBUTED TO THE HARDWIRE...THESE ARE **NOT** NICE ROBOTS, TELSA.
OH, THAT'S RICH, QUON. **YOU** TALKING ABOUT TRUST.

WE DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS, TELSA! YOU CAN PUT ME ON TRIAL WHEN WE GET OUT OF THIS MESS. RIGHT NOW WE JUST NEED A PLAN!
GOD KNOWS WHERE THE HARDWIRE'S HOME IS HIDDEN. WE NEED TO GET TIM AND GET AWAY FROM HERE!

THIS TIM-22... DOES HE HAVE THE SAME MACHINE CODEX AS TIM-21? THE SAME ONE AS THE HARVESTERS?


YES. I BUILT THEM ALL USING THE ANCIENT ROBOT'S TEMPLATE. WHY?
WORSE COMES TO WORSE, WE JUST NEED TO ESCAPE WITH **ONE OF THEM,** THEN.
TELSA! SURELY YOU WOULDN'T LEAVE TIM-21?

SWIP
TIM, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
YES. I'M BETTER. I'M SORRY I SNAPPED AT YOU, CAPTAIN TELSA.
THAT'S-- THAT'S OKAY.
WHAT THE HELL HAPPENED TO YOUR HEAD?
I ADAPTED TO AVOID CONFUSION.
HA! I KNEW THAT WOULD BE A NICE FEATURE WHEN I DESIGNED IT!
WE CAME TO LET YOU KNOW THAT WE ARE ABOUT TO DROP OUT OF SHIFTSPACE! WE ARE ALMOST HOME!
I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT LIKE TO COME UP TO MY FATHER'S PERSONAL OBSERVATION DECK WITH US.
"THE VIEW IS INCREDIBLE FROM UP THERE."
NOW EXITING SHIFTSPACE, COMMANDER PSIUS. READINGS SHOW NO SIGN OF HUMAN LIFE WITHIN RANGE OF THE EXIT POINT. WE ARE SAFE TO MAKE OUR RETURN.
EXCELLENT. I MUST ADMIT, SEMPER, I EXPECTED THE GNISHIANS TO GIVE US MORE OF A CHASE. THE DEATH OF THEIR KING WAS AN UNEXPECTED DISTRACTION.

HELLO, FATHER. I THOUGHT OUR GUESTS WOULD LIKE TO SEE OUR HOME FROM HERE, I HOPE THAT'S ALL RIGHT?

ALL RIGHT?! YOU BRING CARBONS UP HERE?! ARE YOU MAD, BOY?

EASY, OLD FRIEND. YOU HEARD TIM-22...THESE ARE *OUR GUESTS.*

WELCOME TO *OUR* HOMEWORLD.

HOMEWORLD? WE'RE IN AN *ASTEROID FIELD?*

INDEED WE ARE, DR. QUON.

BUT, I ASSURE YOU, THERE IS MORE HERE THAN JUST *FLOATING ROCKS...*

WELCOME TO THE *MACHINE MOON*, TIM-21...
WELCOME HOME.

MACHINE MOON.
The hidden asteroid city of THE HARDWIRE, the robot resistance.
WELCOME TO ROBOT CITY.
YOU WILL NEVER NEED TO RUN AGAIN, TIM-21. YOU WILL NEVER HAVE TO *HIDE* AGAIN.
HERE, ALL ROBOTS LIVE IN HARMONY. FREE FROM THE SLAVE CULTURE THAT THE UGC SUBJECTED MACHINEKIND TO FOR CENTURIES.

THAT'S ALL FINE AND WELL, PSIUS, BUT YOU MUST REALIZE WE CAN'T STAY HERE.
OF COURSE NOT, CAPTAIN TELSA. BUT YOU ALSO MUST UNDERSTAND THAT, NOW THAT YOU'VE SEEN WHERE THE HARDWIRE IS, WE CANNOT SIMPLY LET YOU LEAVE. WE NEED TO TAKE CERTAIN PRECAUTIONS.
AND WE WENT TO A GREAT RISK TO BRING TIM-21 HERE. WHETHER HE WANTS TO STAY, OR LEAVE WITH YOU, IS HIS CHOICE. WE ARE NOT JAILERS.
THE HARDWIRE ARE TERRORISTS, PSIUS. FORGIVE ME IF I FIND THAT HARD TO BELIEVE.
WE ARE NOT TERRORISTS, CAPTAIN. WE ARE SURVIVALISTS. WE WILL DO WHAT IT TAKES TO ENSURE MACHINEKIND ENDURES. BUT THAT DOES NOT MEAN WE SEE ALL HUMANS AS THE ENEMY. UNLIKE YOU, WE ARE CAPABLE OF BEING RATIONAL.

TELSA PROMISED ME SHE WOULD HELP ME FIND ANDY. THAT'S WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO ME.
WELL, TIM-21, IF FINDING THIS HUMAN--*THIS ANDY*--IS IMPORTANT TO *YOU*, THEN IT'S IMPORTANT TO *US* AS WELL.
BUT I WOULD ASK YOU A FAVOR...WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR MORE ABOUT THIS "DREAM" YOU HAD. PERHAPS RUN A *FEW TESTS* ON YOU? BEFORE YOU GO.
TESTS? WHAT KIND OF TESTS?
NOTHING HARMFUL. YOU ARE WELCOME TO HELP US OVERSEE THE PROCESS, DOCTOR QUON. BUT THIS WORLD THAT TIM-21 DESCRIBED... THIS PLACE WHERE ALL THE DESTROYED ROBOTS DWELL...
WE THINK IT MAY BE *REAL*.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
YOU'RE--YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT A "ROBOT HEAVEN"? I'M SORRY, PSIUS, BUT AT THE TIME OF THE ATTACKS, I PRACTICALLY RAN THE UGC'S ROBOT AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE DIVISION. THERE IS NO SUCH PLACE.
WE HAVE HEARD RUMORS, DOCTOR... A SECRET SERVER WHERE THE UGC HAS STORED THE BACKUP MEMORIES OF ALL THE DEAD A.I.S.
SURELY YOU MUST ADMIT THAT THE POSSIBILITY IS TOO GREAT TO IGNORE. IF THERE WAS A CHANCE OF BRINGING BACK ALL THOSE WE LOST...
I DON'T MIND DOING TESTS, DOCTOR QUON. I JUST WANT TO HELP.
FINE, BUT QUON SUPERVISES.
CERTAINLY. WE ARE HONORED TO HAVE HIS EXPERTISE.
YEAH, WELL...THE GOOD DOCTOR MAY NOT BE THE MAN YOU THINK HE IS, PSIUS.
TELSA, PLEASE!

WELL, THEN, I'M SURE OUR GUESTS WOULD LIKE TO FRESHEN UP.
OBVIOUSLY WE ARE NOT USED TO LODGING HUMANS, BUT WE WILL MAKE ARRANGEMENTS FOR YOU.
THANKS.
TIM-22, PERHAPS YOU CAN SHOW TIM-21 YOUR ROOM?
SURE! TIM, YOU WANNA STAY WITH ME? IT WILL BE FUN! I HAVE LOTS OF COOL GAMES.
CAN I, CAPTAIN TELSA?
I'M NOT YOUR MOTHER, TIM. DO WHATEVER YOU WANT.
YEAH! COME ON, 21--I CAN'T WAIT TO SHOW YOU EVERYTHING!

THE PLANET SAMPSON.
Home to the original colonists from Old Earth. Sampson was also home to the largest human cities before the Harvester attacks.
TELL ME AGAIN WHY WE NEEDED THOSE TWO? SHOULD HAVE SCRAPPED THE BIG ONE AND LEFT THE UGC STOOGE ON GNISH.
BIG TALK, SCRAP DOG. WHY DON'T YOU UNSTRAP ME AND SEE HOW TOUGH YOU ARE.
HRRM...YEAH. TAKE OFF THIS MAGNO-COLLAR AND DRILLER'LL SCRAP YOUR HEAD, BIG MOUTH.
QUIET.
I BROUGHT MR. TULLIS BECAUSE KILLING A UGC OFFICER WOULD GET BOTH OUR LICENSES REVOKED. WE'LL DROP HIM OFF SOMEWHERE.
AND WE BROUGHT DRILLER BECAUSE BANDIT HAD A FIT WHEN WE TRIED TO LEAVE HIM. AND WE NEED BANDIT.
RRR!

YEAH, ABOUT THAT...YOU SAID YOUR EX-WIFE WAS GONNA HELP US, KID. SO WHY THE BLAZES ARE WE ON SAMPSON? THIS PLACE GOT HIT HARDEST BY THE HARVESTERS.
AIN'T NO ONE LEFT ON SAMPSON 'CEPT A BUNCH OF WHACKOS.
EXACTLY.
EXACTLY WHAT?
WE CAME TO SEE A BUNCH OF WHACKOS.
FWP
HEY!
THWAP
WHACKOS?

I WARNED YOU ABOUT THAT SORT OF LANGUAGE THE LAST TIME I SAW YOU, ANDY.
WE ARE ***THE BETWEEN.*** THIS IS OUR HOME. SHOW RESPECT, ***OR LEAVE.***
ARF?

YOU BROUGHT US TO A TWIBBIN' CYBORG CULT?! I'M GONNA LOSE MY LUNCH!!
I'M SORRY, EFFIE. MY FRIEND ISN'T THE MOST--
YOU WILL TELL THIS LUMP OF FLESH TO SHUT HIS GIANT MOUTH, OR I'LL DO IT FOR HIM.
WHOA-- WHOA! SORRY, SORRY!
SORRY, EFFIE-- PLEASE. WE COME IN PEACE. I JUST WANT TO TALK.
I TOLD YOU... I WILL NOT RESPOND TO MY FLESH NAME ANYMORE. IF YOU WANT TO TALK TO ME, YOU CALL ME BY MY ARTIFICIAL NAME.

...FINE.
QUEEN BETWEEN. I NEED TO TALK TO YOU. I NEED YOUR HELP.
BETTER.
LET'S GO, THEN...WE HAVE QUITE A HIKE AHEAD OF US IF WE WANT TO GET BACK TO THE COLONY BEFORE SUNRISE.
WHAT HAPPENS AT SUNRISE?
SOLAR WORMS. BIG ONES.
TERRIFIC.
KRRRN...DRILLER DON'T LIKE WRRRMS.

CRACK
TIM-22? IS THAT YOU?
FOOOM FOOM
RAAAAAAAARRR!

HI-YA!!

-RRRR!!

USE YOUR SWORD, TIM-21! IT ONLY COSTS SIX CREDS! TAKE OUT THE DRAGON'S FEET!

OKAY-- BUT I--

BLEEP

I DON'T REALLY LIKE THIS. CAN WE STOP NOW? PLEASE?

SORRY. IT'S A LITTLE TOO SCARY FOR ME.
IT'S OKAY. I HAVE LOTS OF OTHER GAMES TOO.
MAYBE I JUST DON'T REALLY LIKE GAMES THAT MUCH. BACK ON DIRISHU, MOM DIDN'T WANT US PLAYING GAMES. ANDY AND I MOSTLY READ AND DREW AND WROTE OUR OWN STORIES AND STUFF.
I LIKE READING! I HAVE OVER A THOUSAND BOOKS ON MY PROJO. WANT TO READ WITH ME?
ACTUALLY...I HAVE SOMETHING TO SHOW YOU.
MOM USED TO GET ANDY AND ME REAL BOOKS! I BROUGHT ONE WITH ME.
OH, *TRINKET TOCKET!* YEAH, I WATCHED ALL THE HOLOS! I LOVE THESE TOO!
THIS IS SO...WEIRD. I'VE NEVER SEEN A BOOK **ON PAPER.**
WHY DO YOU LIKE READING THEM LIKE THIS? FEELS SO...FAKE.
I DON'T KNOW. MOM USED TO READ THEM TO ANDY AND ME BEFORE BED. I GREW TO ENJOY IT.

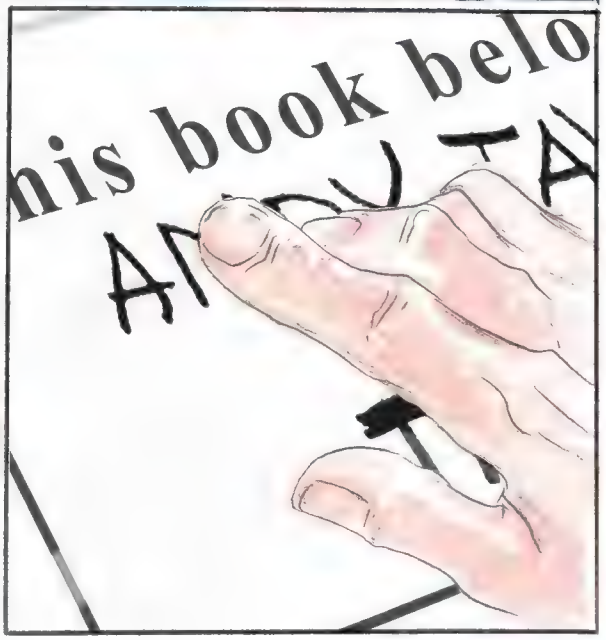
TIM...YOU KNOW THEY WEREN'T REALLY YOUR FAMILY, RIGHT? I MEAN, PSIUS ISN'T MY FATHER EITHER, BUT AT LEAST HERE WE ARE ALL MACHINES.

BUT THEY WERE MY REAL FAMILY. AT LEAST THEY BECAME MY FAMILY.
OKAY. I'M SORRY. I DIDN'T MEAN TO MAKE YOU FEEL BAD.
THAT'S ALL RIGHT.

COME ON-- I WANT TO SHOW YOU MORE STUFF!
OKAY.

Trinket Tocket
Tin Rocket

This book belongs to:
ANDY TAVERS
AND
TIM-21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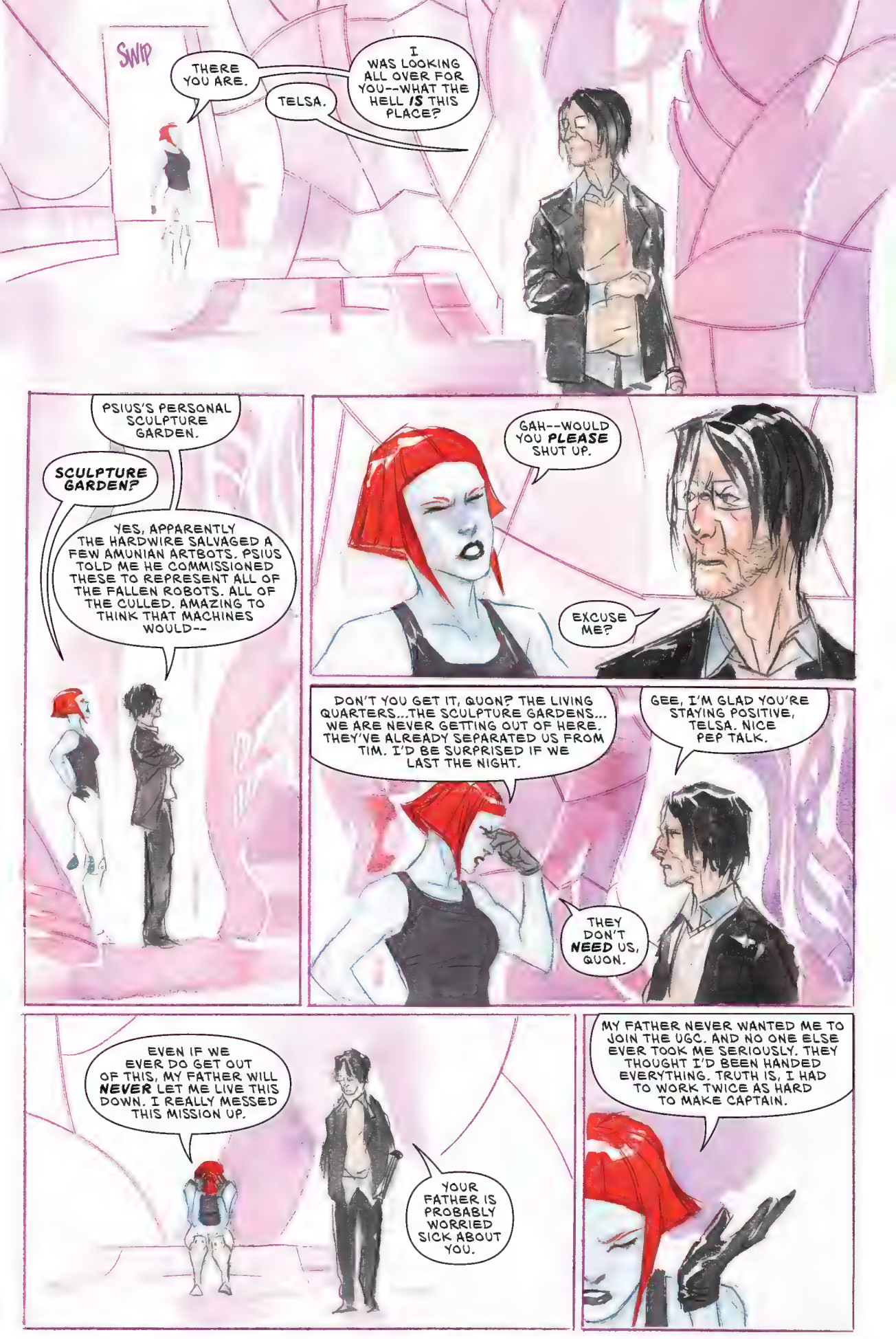
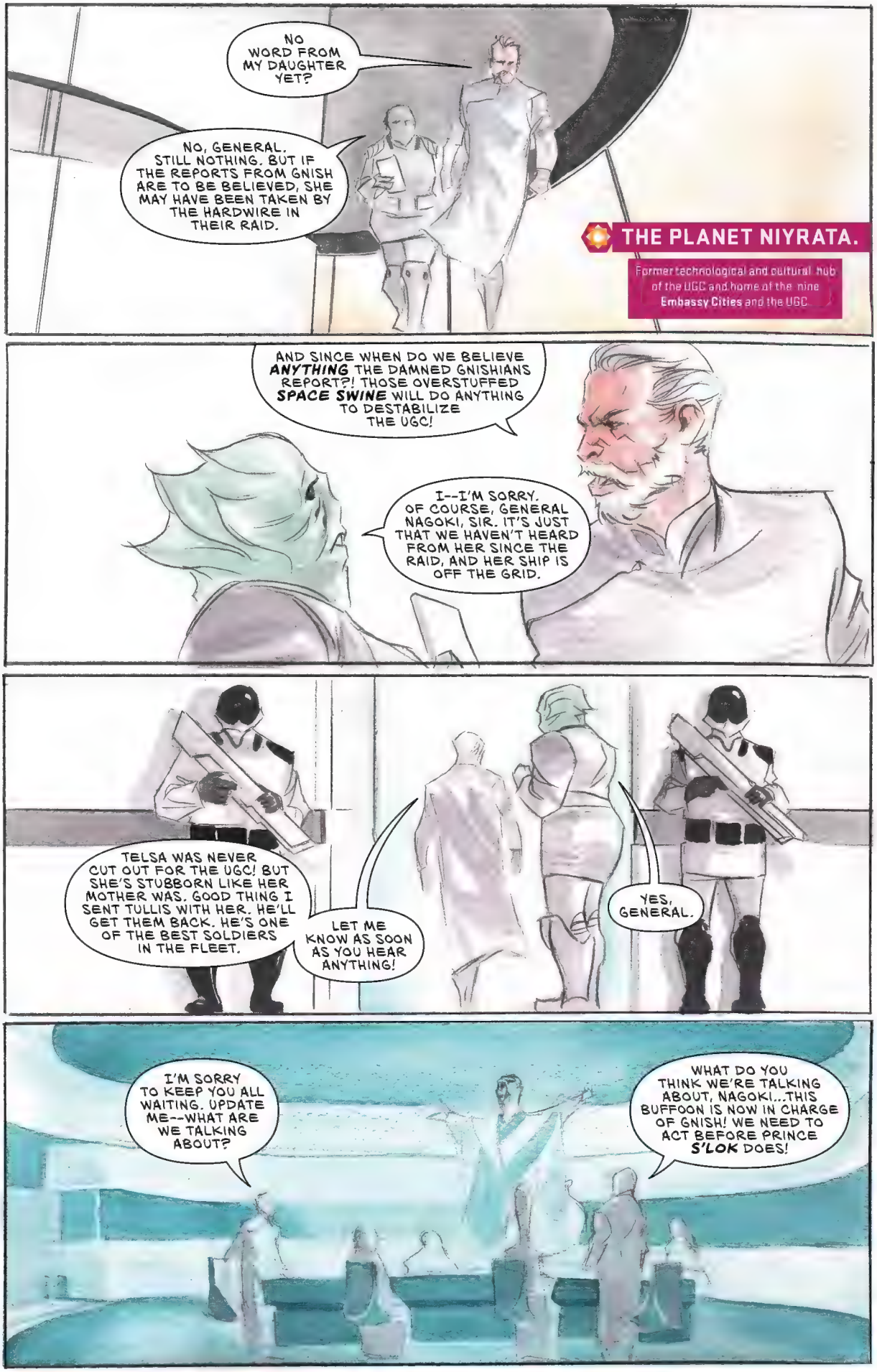
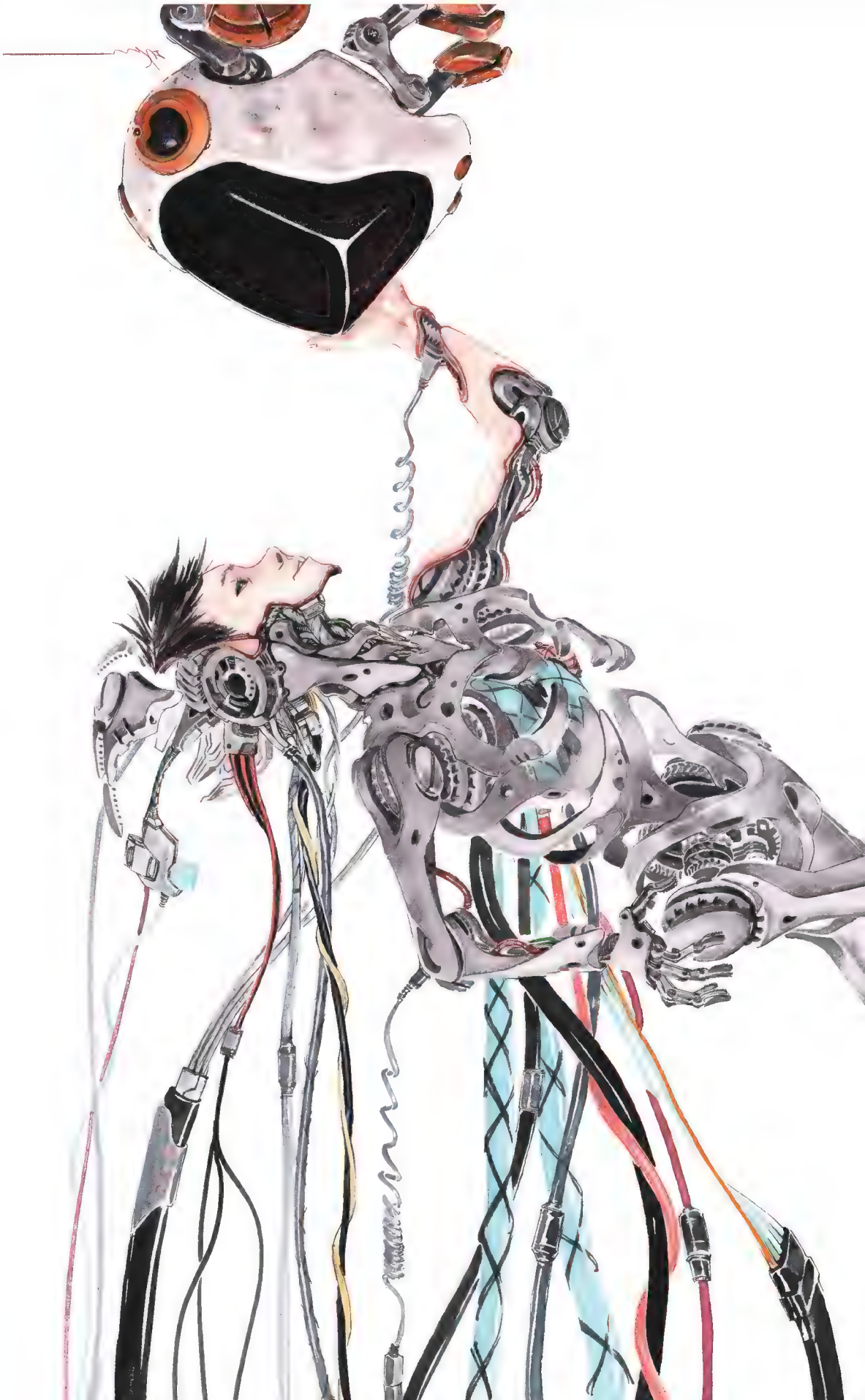

SWIP
THERE YOU ARE.
TELSA.
I WAS LOOKING ALL OVER FOR YOU--WHAT THE HELL *IS* THIS PLACE?
PSIUS'S PERSONAL SCULPTURE GARDEN.
SCULPTURE GARDEN?
YES, APPARENTLY THE HARDWIRE SALVAGED A FEW AMUNIAN ARTBOTS. PSIUS TOLD ME HE COMMISSIONED THESE TO REPRESENT ALL OF THE FALLEN ROBOTS. ALL OF THE CULLED. AMAZING TO THINK THAT MACHINES WOULD--
GAH--WOULD YOU *PLEASE* SHUT UP.
EXCUSE ME?
DON'T YOU GET IT, QUON? THE LIVING QUARTERS...THE SCULPTURE GARDENS... WE ARE NEVER GETTING OUT OF HERE. THEY'VE ALREADY SEPARATED US FROM TIM. I'D BE SURPRISED IF WE LAST THE NIGHT.
GEE, I'M GLAD YOU'RE STAYING POSITIVE, TELSA. NICE PEP TALK.
THEY DON'T *NEED* US, QUON.
EVEN IF WE EVER DO GET OUT OF THIS, MY FATHER WILL *NEVER* LET ME LIVE THIS DOWN. I REALLY MESSED THIS MISSION UP.
YOUR FATHER IS PROBABLY WORRIED SICK ABOUT YOU.
MY FATHER NEVER WANTED ME TO JOIN THE UGC. AND NO ONE ELSE EVER TOOK ME SERIOUSLY. THEY THOUGHT I'D BEEN HANDED EVERYTHING. TRUTH IS, I HAD TO WORK TWICE AS HARD TO MAKE CAPTAIN.

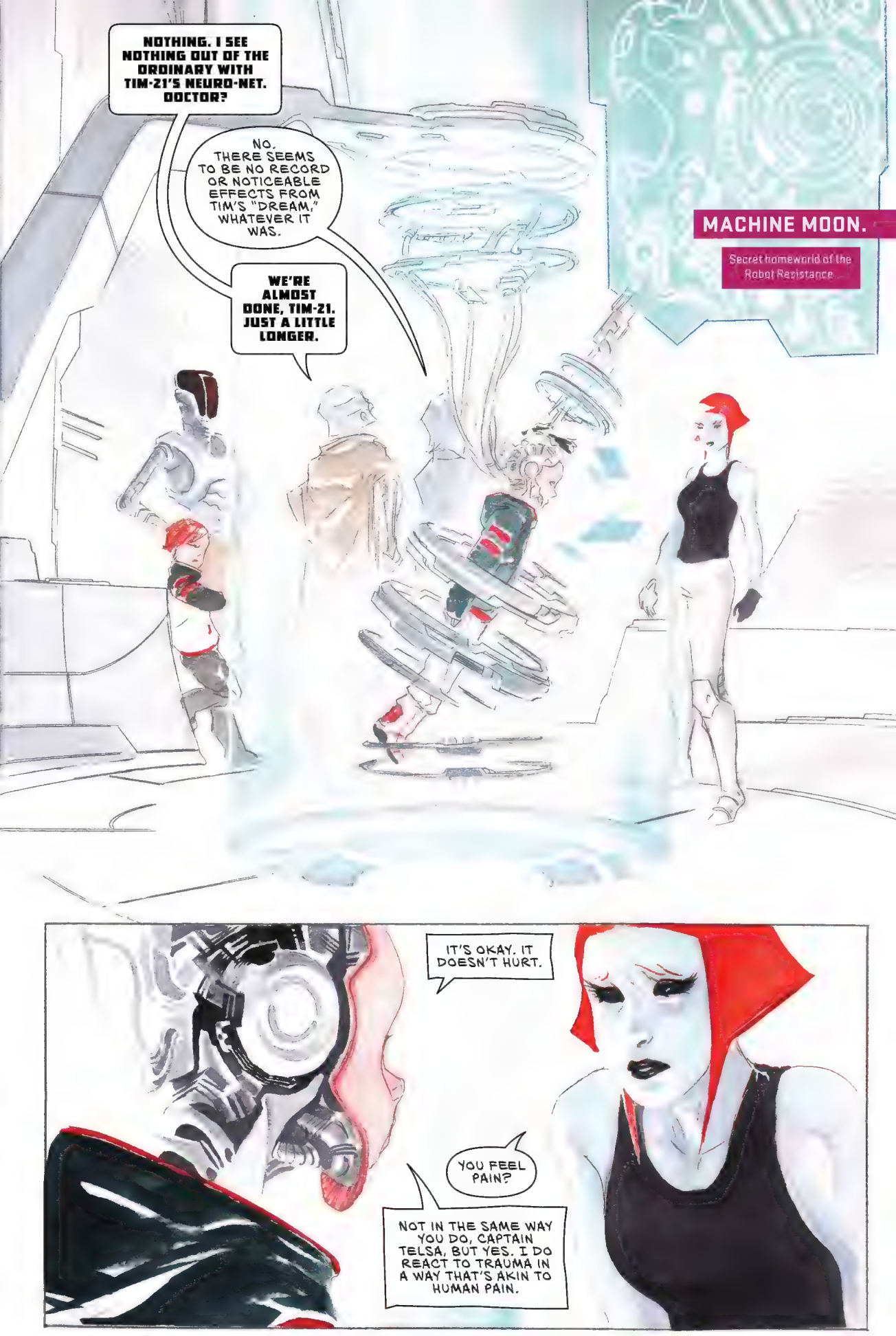
I'M SORRY. I KNOW HOW HARD IT CAN BE TO HAVE TO LIVE UP TO IMPOSSIBLE EXPECTATIONS.
WE ARE NOTHING ALIKE, QUON. YOU LIED AND STOLE TO MAKE YOUR NAME. I WORKED MY ASS OFF TO GET TO WHERE I AM.
YOU DESERVE EVERYTHING THAT'S HAPPENED TO YOU. SO DON'T YOU DARE COMPARE YOURSELF TO ME!
LOOK, ARGUING ISN'T GOING TO GET US ANYWHERE.
DID YOU EVER STOP TO THINK THAT MAYBE PSIUS IS TELLING THE TRUTH? THAT THEY WANT TO WORK WITH US?
YOU SURE THEY DIDN'T REPLACE YOUR BRAIN WHEN THEY GAVE YOU THAT HAND, DOC?!
WE ARE BEHIND ENEMY LINES, QUON.
YOU BETTER PICK A SIDE SOON. BECAUSE I'M NOT PLANNING ON STICKING AROUND...
...AND WHEN PSIUS FINDS OUT YOU'RE A FRAUD, HE MAY NOT BE SO WELCOMING.


NO WORD FROM MY DAUGHTER YET?
NO, GENERAL. STILL NOTHING. BUT IF THE REPORTS FROM GNISH ARE TO BE BELIEVED, SHE MAY HAVE BEEN TAKEN BY THE HARDWIRE IN THEIR RAID.
THE PLANET NIYRATA.
Former technological and cultural hub of the UGC and home of the nine Embassy Cities and the UGC
AND SINCE WHEN DO WE BELIEVE ANYTHING THE DAMNED GNISHIANS REPORT?! THOSE OVERSTUFFED SPACE SWINE WILL DO ANYTHING TO DESTABILIZE THE UGC!
I--I'M SORRY. OF COURSE, GENERAL NAGOKI, SIR. IT'S JUST THAT WE HAVEN'T HEARD FROM HER SINCE THE RAID, AND HER SHIP IS OFF THE GRID.
TELSA WAS NEVER CUT OUT FOR THE UGC! BUT SHE'S STUBBORN LIKE HER MOTHER WAS. GOOD THING I SENT TULLIS WITH HER. HE'LL GET THEM BACK. HE'S ONE OF THE BEST SOLDIERS IN THE FLEET.
LET ME KNOW AS SOON AS YOU HEAR ANYTHING!
YES, GENERAL.
I'M SORRY TO KEEP YOU ALL WAITING. UPDATE ME--WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?
WHAT DO YOU THINK WE'RE TALKING ABOUT, NAGOKI...THIS BUFFOON IS NOW IN CHARGE OF GNISH! WE NEED TO ACT BEFORE PRINCE S'LOK DOES!

YOU MEAN KING S'LOK. GODS HELP US. S'NOK WAS A DEVIOUS BASTARD, BUT HIS SON IS AN OUTRIGHT LUNATIC. HE'S ALREADY MOBILIZED THE GNISHIAN FLEET AND IS THREATENING TO ENTER SAMPSONITE SPACE ANY DAY!
AS BAD AS THE SITUATION ON GNISH IS, I'M AFRAID WE MAY HAVE BIGGER PROBLEMS AT HAND.
BIGGER THAN GALACTIC WAR, AMBASSADOR TELEMA?
I BELIEVE THE AMBASSADOR FROM SILENOS HAS SOMETHING VERY URGENT TO BRING TO THE COUNCIL'S ATTENTION?
THANK YOU, TELEMA. YOU ALL KNOW IT IS NOT OUR WAY TO INTERRUPT. BUT IN RECENT DAYS MANY OF OUR STRONGEST PROGNOSTICS HAS HAD A COMMON VISION. ONE THAT IS EXTREMELY TROUBLING.
WELL, THINK UP, OLD MAN. WHAT IS IT THAT HAS YOU SO SPOOKED?
I BELIEVE IT MAY BE BETTER TO SHOW YOU.
AS YOU ALL KNOW, THE PRECOGNITIVE ABILITIES OF OUR RACE ARE STRONGEST AMONGST OUR YOUNG, ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO DID NOT LIVE THROUGH THE PSYCHIC SHOCK OF THE HARVESTER ATTACKS.
A GROUP OF OUR MOST GIFTED HAVE TRAVELED WITH ME TODAY.
CHILDREN... PLEASE SHOW THEM. PROJECT YOUR VISION INTO THEIR MINDS.
DO WE HAVE TO? IT'S SCARY.
I KNOW, YOUNG ONES. BUT THEY NEED TO SEE WHAT YOU ALL SAW...

THAT THE HARVESTERS ARE RETURNING...AND THIS ROBOT...TIM-21--HE IS THE ONE WHO WILL BRING THEM!




NOTHING. I SEE NOTHING OUT OF THE ORDINARY WITH TIM-21'S NEURO-NET. DOCTOR?
NO. THERE SEEMS TO BE NO RECORD OR NOTICEABLE EFFECTS FROM TIM'S "DREAM," WHATEVER IT WAS.
WE'RE ALMOST DONE, TIM-21. JUST A LITTLE LONGER.
MACHINE MOON.
Secret homeworld of the Robot Resistance
IT'S OKAY. IT DOESN'T HURT.
YOU FEEL PAIN?
NOT IN THE SAME WAY YOU DO, CAPTAIN TELSA, BUT YES. I DO REACT TO TRAUMA IN A WAY THAT'S AKIN TO HUMAN PAIN.

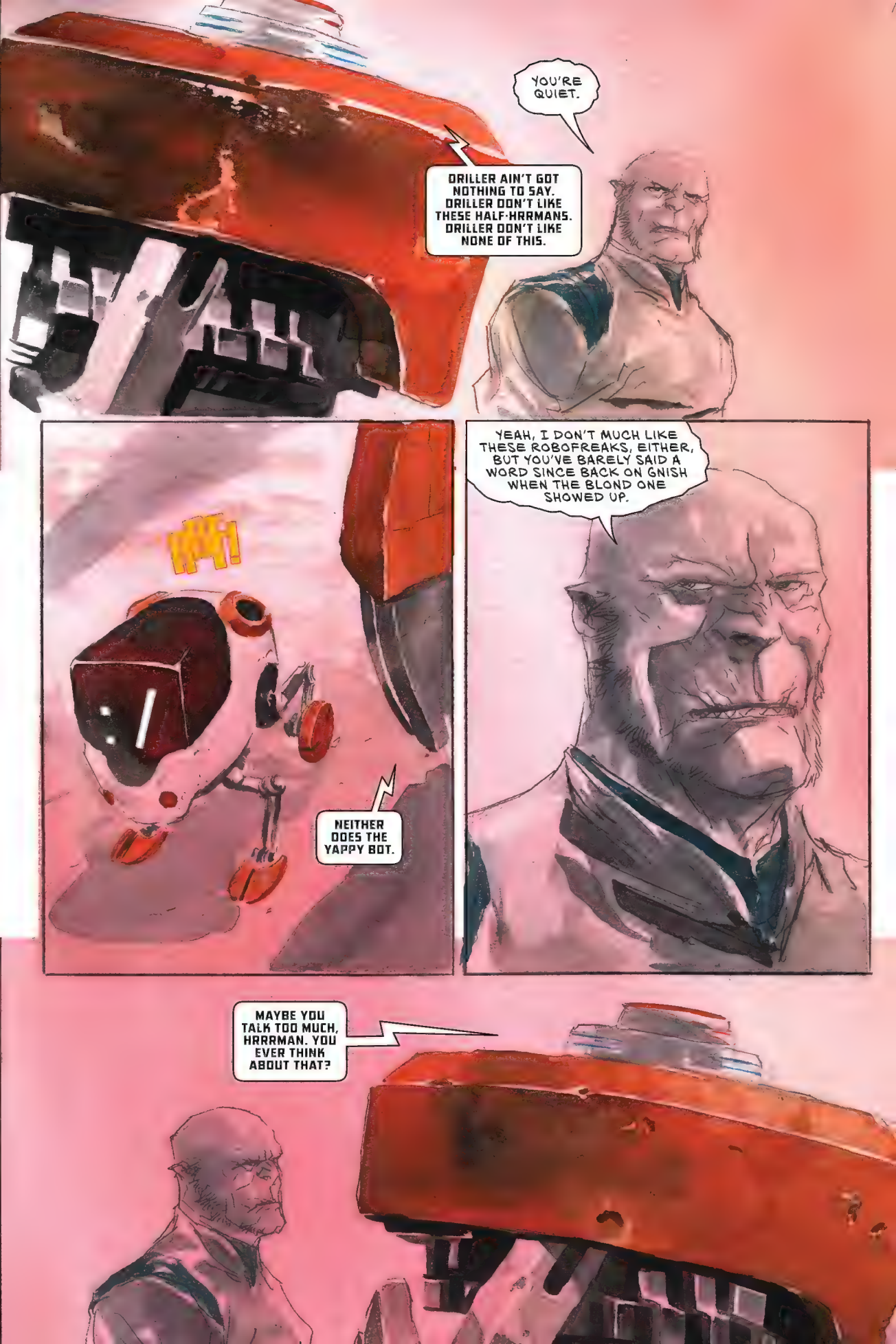
THIS IS BORING. ARE WE ALMOST DONE, FATHER?
THAT IS ENOUGH, TIM-22! IF YOU CAN'T BEHAVE, GO TO YOUR ROOM AND REBOOT.
I--I AM SORRY, FATHER.
DISCOVERING THE TRUTH ABOUT TIM-21'S "DREAM" MAY HELP UNLOCK THE SECRETS OF THE HARVESTERS...
...OR EVEN PROVE THE EXISTENCE OF THE SHADOW SERVER, WHERE I BELIEVE THE *MEMORIES* OF ALL OF THE DESTROYED ROBOTS LIE.
QUON ALREADY TOLD YOU NO SHADOW SERVER EXISTED IN THE UGC.
MAYBE NOT... BUT THERE ARE WORLDS BEYOND THE ONE WE *KNOW*, CAPTAIN.
AND YOU SAY YOU BASED THE TIM SERIES AND ALL OF OUR ADAPTIVE UPGRADES ON THIS ANCIENT ROBOT YOU DISCOVERED ON OSTRAKON, DR. QUON?
YES.
BEFORE TIM, ROBOTS WERE NOT NEARLY AS... "HUMAN."
WATCH YOUR MOUTH!
EASY, SEMPER.
UPGRADES?
THE TIM SERIES WAS A MASSIVE BREAK-THROUGH.
FOR YEARS AFTER, I USED WHAT I'D LEARNED TO UPGRADE THE EMOTIVE AND ADAPTIVE ABILITIES OF MOST EXISTING ROBOTS ALL ACROSS THE UGC.
AFTER ALL, DR. QUON COULD NOT BE MORE MISTAKEN. HE JUST ADMITTED THAT OUR PERSONALITIES AND NATURE WERE BASED ON *ANOTHER* ROBOT--THE ANCIENT ROBOT *HE STOLE*-- NOT HUMANS.

NO HUMAN COULD HAVE CREATED A MACHINE THIS COMPLEX.
OH PLEASE! I MAY HAVE STOLEN THE RESEARCH, BUT I STILL DID THE WORK! IT WAS ME WHO USED IT TO UPGRADE ROBOTS LIKE YOU, PSIUS.
I RECOGNIZE YOUR DESIGN, PSIUS. WHAT WERE YOU BEFORE YOU BECAME LEADER OF THE HARDWIRE? A REPAIR BOT? A CULINARY BOT PERHAPS?
...
WHAT I WAS NO LONGER MATTERS, DOCTOR. THE HARVESTERS CHANGED EVERYTHING.
ARE WE DONE HERE?
YES. FOR NOW.
FATHER, MAY I TAKE TIM-21 ON A TOUR OF THE INNER CORE? I THINK HE WOULD ENJOY IT.
HE'S NOT GOING ANYWHERE ELSE WITHOUT ME.
I TOLD YOU, YOU ARE WELCOME HERE ON OUR HOMEWORLD AS LONG AS YOU STAY WITHIN THE QUARANTINED AREAS. TIM-21, HOWEVER, IS FREE TO DO AS HE PLEASES. AS ARE ALL ROBOTS HERE.
IT'S OKAY, CAPTAIN TELSA. IT WOULD BE GOOD TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS PLACE.

DON'T BE LONG, TIM.
I WON'T.
WHAT ARE YOU SMIRKING AT?!
IF I DIDN'T KNOW BETTER, I'D SAY YOU'RE STARTING TO GET A LITTLE ATTACHED TO TIM-21, TELSA. IMAGINE, A MACHINE MELTING YOUR HEART.
HEY!
AND IF I DIDN'T KNOW BETTER, I'D THINK YOU WANTED TO LOSE ALL YOUR TEETH, DOC.

CAPTAIN, PLEASE. THESE OUTBURSTS WILL NOT BE--
SHUT UP, PSIUS! I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF YOUR PATRONIZING CRAP!
HOW LONG DO YOU INTEND ON KEEPING US HERE?
AS LONG AS IT TAKES. WHEN TIM-21 HELPS US GET WHAT WE WANT, I WILL RETURN YOU TO THE UGC, CAPTAIN.
BESIDES...HE HARDLY SEEMS TO MIND. UNLESS I'M MISTAKEN, I WOULD SAY HE HAS REALLY TAKEN TO THE HARDWIRE.
YOU CAN SELL THAT "QUARANTINE" CRAP TO TIM, PSIUS, BUT I KNOW WHAT WE ARE...WE'RE PRISONERS.
DON'T GET TOO COMFORTABLE, QUON. THE SECOND THEY GET WHAT THEY WANT, HE'LL KILL US BOTH.

THE PLANET SAMPSON.
Home to the original colonists from Old Earth, Sampson was also home to the largest human cities before the Harvester attacks.
ANDY, THIS PLACE IS FARTHER THAN I THOUGHT. DON'T FORGET WHERE WE PARKED THE SPACE DAGGER.
THE HELL IS A SPACE DAGGER?
IT'S WHAT WE NAMED OUR SHIP.
NO, BLUGGER-- IT'S WHAT YOU NAMED MY SHIP.
DON'T MIND HIM. HE GETS GRUMPY IF WE SKIP BREAKFAST.


YOU'RE QUIET.
DRILLER AIN'T GOT NOTHING TO SAY. DRILLER DON'T LIKE THESE HALF-HRRMANS. DRILLER DON'T LIKE NONE OF THIS.
YEAH, I DON'T MUCH LIKE THESE ROBOFREAKS, EITHER, BUT YOU'VE BARELY SAID A WORD SINCE BACK ON GNISH WHEN THE BLOND ONE SHOWED UP.
NEITHER DOES THE YAPPY BOT.
MAYBE YOU TALK TOO MUCH, HRRRMAN. YOU EVER THINK ABOUT THAT?

HOW MUCH FURTHER, EFFIE?
I TOLD YOU. IT'S QUEEN BETWEEN NOW.
COME ON, EFF. IT'S ME.
YES, IT'S YOU. A MURDERER.
I'M A SCRAPPER. NOT A KILLER.
MACHINE LIFE IS STILL LIFE, ANDY.
HAVE YOU BEEN HERE SINCE--SINCE THE LAST TIME I SAW YOU?
YES. MOST OF THE UGC ISN'T VERY WELCOMING TO THE BETWEEN. NO ONE BOTHERS US HERE.
LISTEN--I KNOW WE DIDN'T END THINGS ON GOOD TERMS. AND--AND I DON'T THINK I'LL EVER UNDERSTAND WHY YOU CHOSE TO LIVE YOUR LIFE THIS WAY.
BUT...I NEED YOUR HELP.
FIRST WE NEED TO GET BELOW, THEN WE CAN TALK ABOUT WHAT YOU NEED FROM ME, ANDY.

NOW HURRY. THE SUN IS ALMOST UP...THE WORMS WILL COME SOON.
I DON'T THINK IT'S THE WORMS YOU SHOULD BE WORRYING ABOUT.
BOOM-BOOM
WHAT WAS THAT?
SHIPS. BREAKING THE ATMOSPHERE.
SHIPS?
RUN!!
THEY MUST HAVE FOLLOWED US!
WHO?! WHO FOLLOWED YOU?!

CHOOM
GNISHYS!!!

MACHINE MOON.
Carbon life form detected.
Access denied.
UNGH!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

WHAT ARE ***YOU*** DOING? ARE YOU FOLLOWING ME?

DON'T BE SO PARANOID. I WAS LOOKING FOR YOU TO APOLOGIZE. NOW WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

TRYING TO OPEN THIS DOOR. QUARANTINE DOESN'T AGREE WITH ME. I'M GOING TO FIND TIM AND THEN FIND A WAY OFF THIS PLACE.

YOU'RE GOING TO GET US KILLED!

YEAH, WELL, YOU'RE THE GENIUS, SO HELP ME GET THIS THING OPEN. OR DO YOU NEED TO ***STEAL*** A SET OF BLUEPRINTS FIRST?

:SIGH: DON'T YOU THINK IT'S SMARTER TO PLAY ALONG WITH PSIUS?

DON'T YOU REALIZE WHAT HE'S DOING?

HE'S HAVING THAT CREEPY ***OTHER*** TIM BOND WITH OUR TIM, SEPARATING US MORE AND MORE.

IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME.

YOU REALLY ***ARE*** BEING PARANOID. TIM WOULD NEVER BETRAY US.

HE'S A MACHINE, QUON. DON'T TRUST THEM!

HOW DO YOU KNOW THE TIMS EVEN WENT THIS WAY?

I DON'T, BUT I SAW A BUNCH OF OTHER ROBBIES COMING OUT OF HERE, SO IT'S AS GOOD A PLACE AS ANY TO START LOOKING. IF NOTHING ELSE, MAYBE WE CAN FIND A SHUTTLE OR...

...SOMETHING.

WHAT WAS THAT YOU SAID ABOUT ME BEING PARANOID, QUON?

YOU SHOULD NEVER HAVE DISOBEYED ME. IT IS FORBIDDEN FOR YOU TO BE HERE.

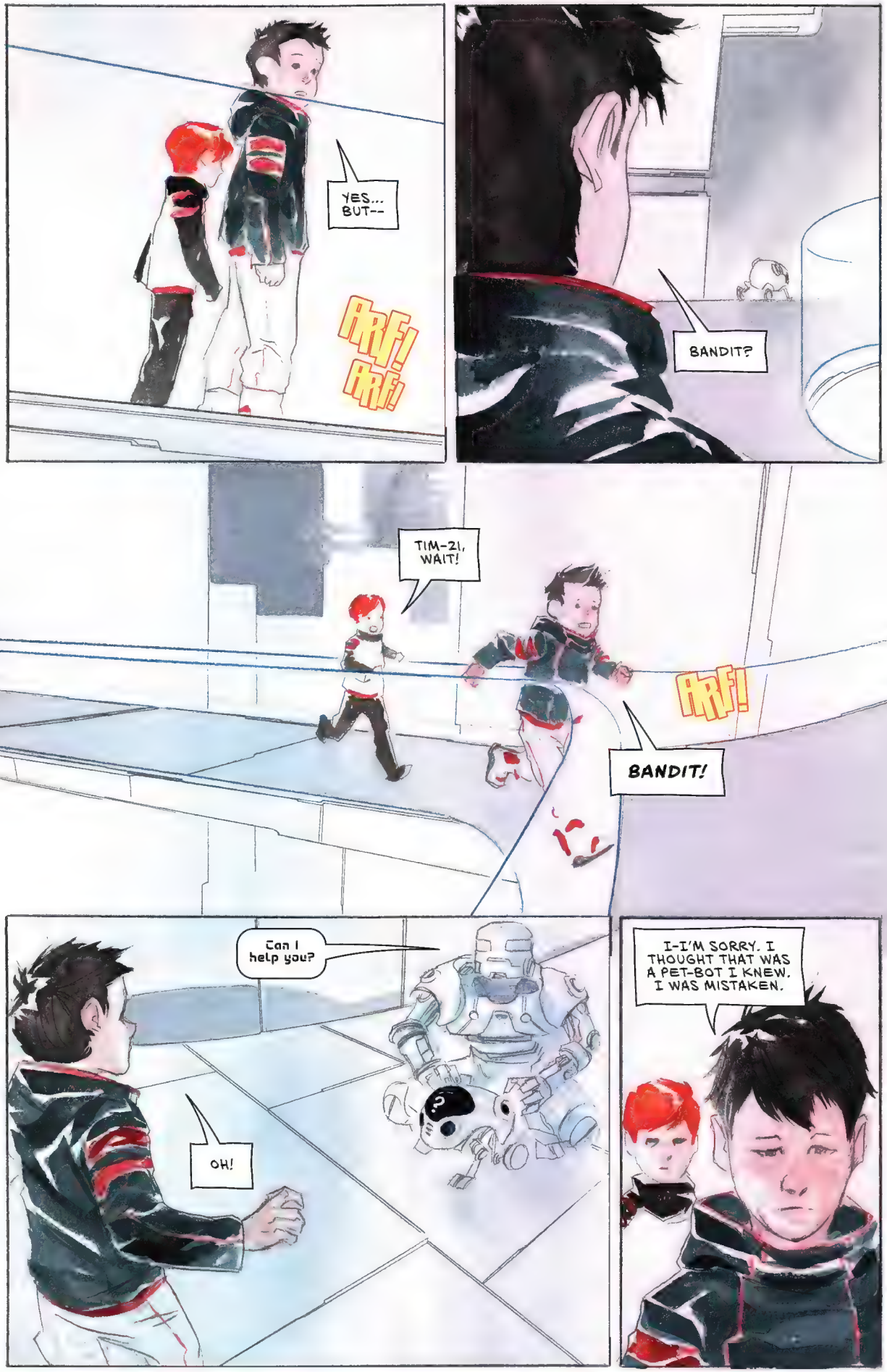
I KNEW MACHINES COULD BE KILLERS, PSIUS, BUT I DIDN'T THINK YOU COULD BE ***INSANE.*** THIS PLACE...YOU WHAT, WORSHIP THE HARVESTERS?

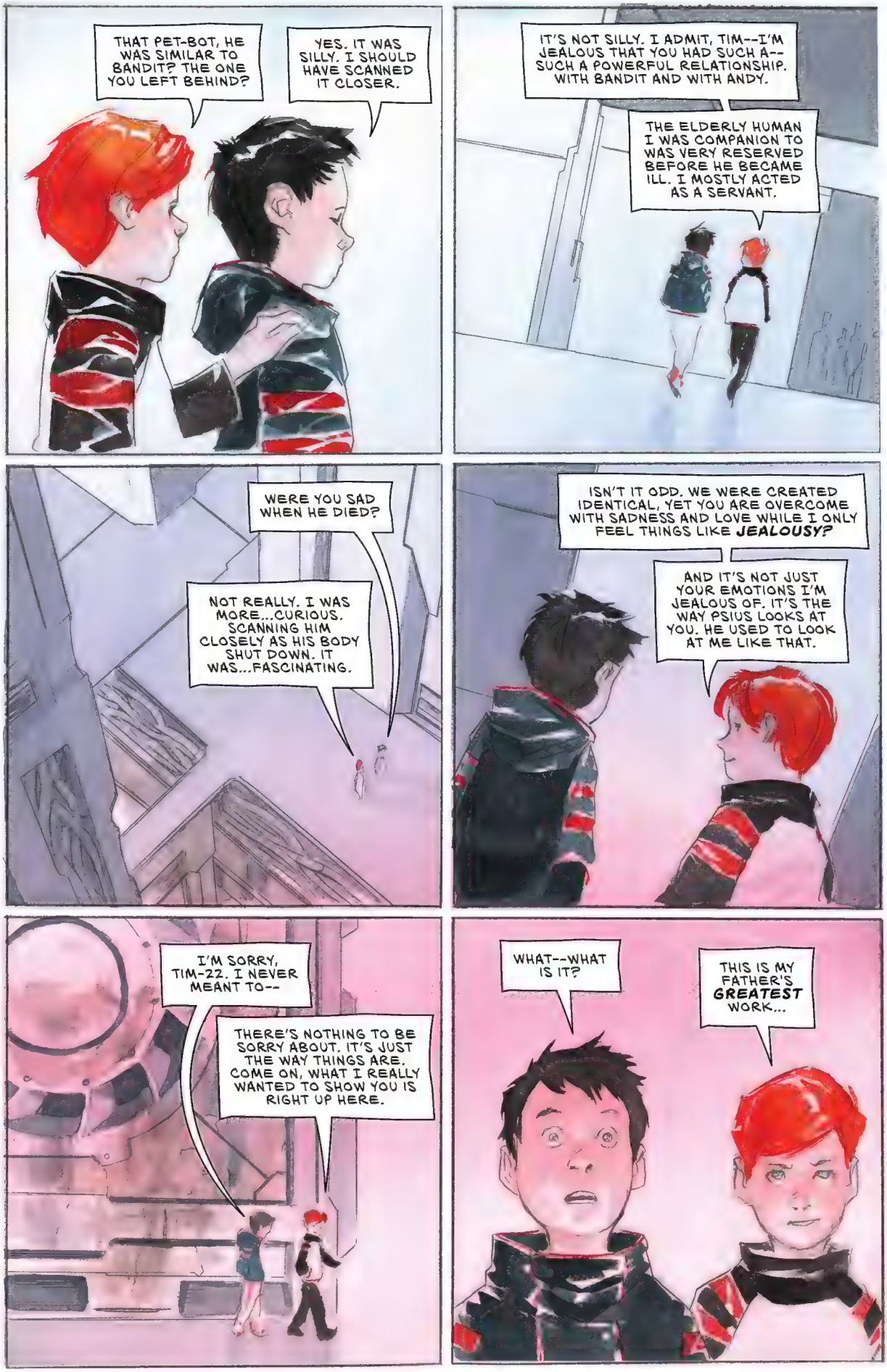
YOU CALL THEM HARVESTERS...

...WE CALL THEM ***GODS.***

AND NOW IT IS TIME FOR A SACRIFICE.
TIM WILL NEVER HELP YOU IF YOU HURT US!
DON'T YOU SEE...TIM HAD HIS DREAM WHEN HE WAS NEARLY DESTROYED. WE ARE GOING TO FINISH THE JOB.
AND WE DON'T NEED EITHER OF YOU ANYMORE. KILL THEM, SEMPER.
WAIT! T-THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE. SOMETHING I DIDN'T TELL YOU...ABOUT THE ANCIENT ROBOT AND DR. SOLOMON.
WHAT IS IT? IF YOU LIE, I WILL KNOW.
I KNOW. I'M NOT LYING. BUT IF I TELL YOU...YOU HAVE TO PROMISE NOT TO HURT ME.
QUON, WHAT ARE YOU--?
THE ANCIENT ROBOT AND DR. SOLOMON, THEY ARE STILL ALIVE...
AND I KNOW WHERE THEY ARE.

I CAN'T BELIEVE ALL OF THIS IS HIDDEN INSIDE AN ASTEROID!
YES, MY FATHER AND THE HARDWIRE HAVE BEEN BUILDING IT SINCE THE ROBOT CULLS BEGAN ALMOST TEN YEARS AGO. AND THEY'VE MADE IT A SAFE HAVEN FOR ALL ROBOTS.
BUT CAPTAIN TELSA SAID THAT THE HARDWIRE ARE TERRORISTS. THEY-- THEY HURT PEOPLE.
THEY ONLY ATTACK THOSE WHO ARE TRYING TO EXTERMINATE MACHINEKIND, 21. YOU MUST KNOW THAT WE ARE ON THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION NOW.


YES... BUT--
ARF! ARF!
BANDIT?
TIM-21, WAIT!
ARF!
BANDIT!
Can I help you?
OH!
I-I'M SORRY. I THOUGHT THAT WAS A PET-BOT I KNEW. I WAS MISTAKEN.


THAT PET-BOT, HE WAS SIMILAR TO BANDIT? THE ONE YOU LEFT BEHIND?
YES. IT WAS SILLY. I SHOULD HAVE SCANNED IT CLOSER.
IT'S NOT SILLY. I ADMIT, TIM--I'M JEALOUS THAT YOU HAD SUCH A-- SUCH A POWERFUL RELATIONSHIP. WITH BANDIT AND WITH ANDY.
THE ELDERLY HUMAN I WAS COMPANION TO WAS VERY RESERVED BEFORE HE BECAME ILL. I MOSTLY ACTED AS A SERVANT.
WERE YOU SAD WHEN HE DIED?
NOT REALLY. I WAS MORE...CURIOUS. SCANNING HIM CLOSELY AS HIS BODY SHUT DOWN. IT WAS...FASCINATING.
ISN'T IT ODD. WE WERE CREATED IDENTICAL, YET YOU ARE OVERCOME WITH SADNESS AND LOVE WHILE I ONLY FEEL THINGS LIKE JEALOUSY?
AND IT'S NOT JUST YOUR EMOTIONS I'M JEALOUS OF. IT'S THE WAY PSIUS LOOKS AT YOU. HE USED TO LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT.
I'M SORRY, TIM-22. I NEVER MEANT TO--
THERE'S NOTHING TO BE SORRY ABOUT. IT'S JUST THE WAY THINGS ARE. COME ON, WHAT I REALLY WANTED TO SHOW YOU IS RIGHT UP HERE.
WHAT--WHAT IS IT?
THIS IS MY FATHER'S GREATEST WORK...

THIS IS *OUR ARMY.* THIS IS HOW WE WILL *FIGHT BACK.* THIS IS HOW WE WILL *ERADICATE MANKIND.*

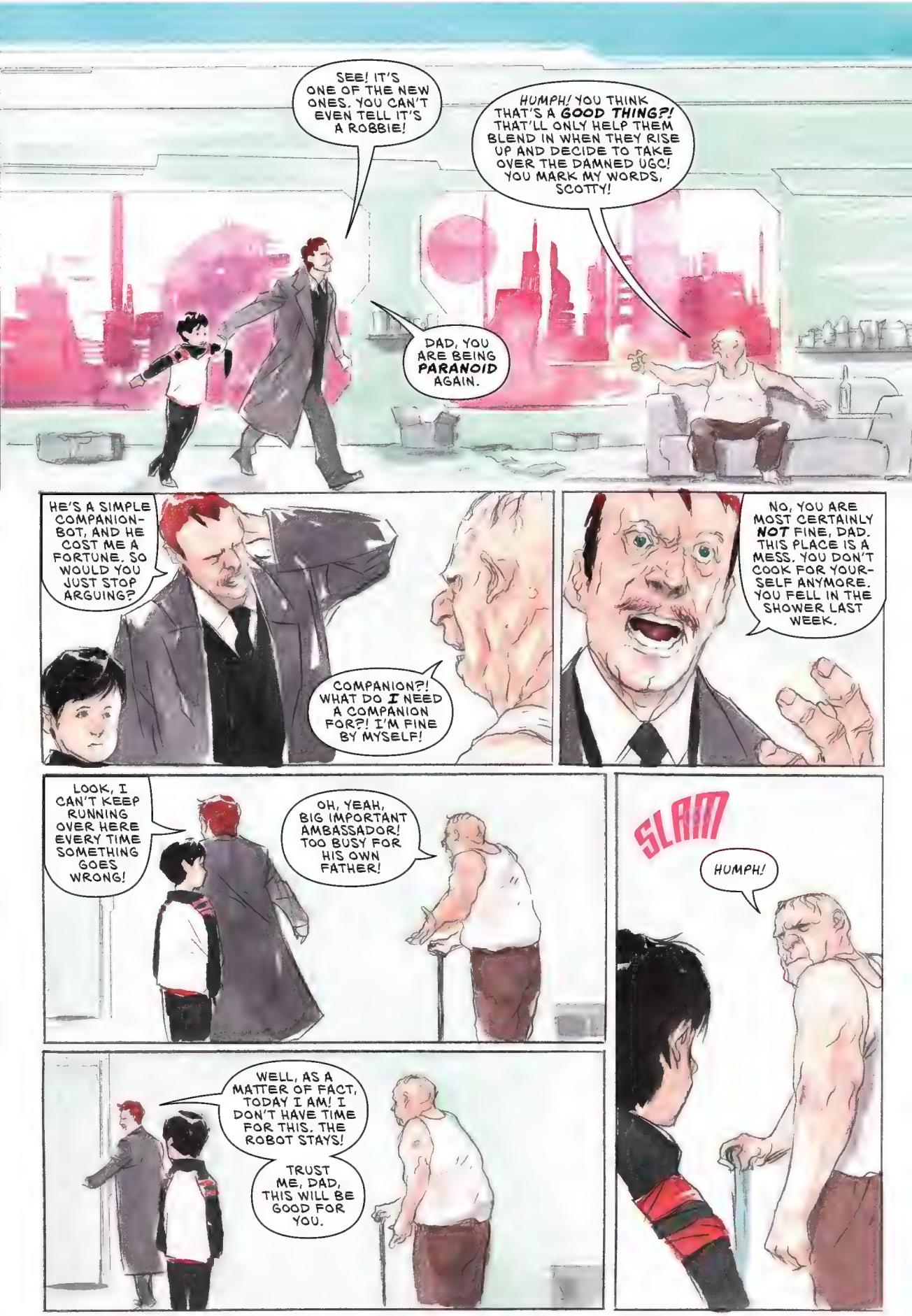
PSIUS WILL LEAD MACHINEKIND TO *GREATNESS,* AND I SHOULD BE AT HIS SIDE, TIM-21-- *NOT YOU...*

YOU SEE, THAT IS WHY I *REALLY* BROUGHT YOU ALL THE WAY DOWN HERE, TIM-21. I WANTED US TO BE *ALONE...*

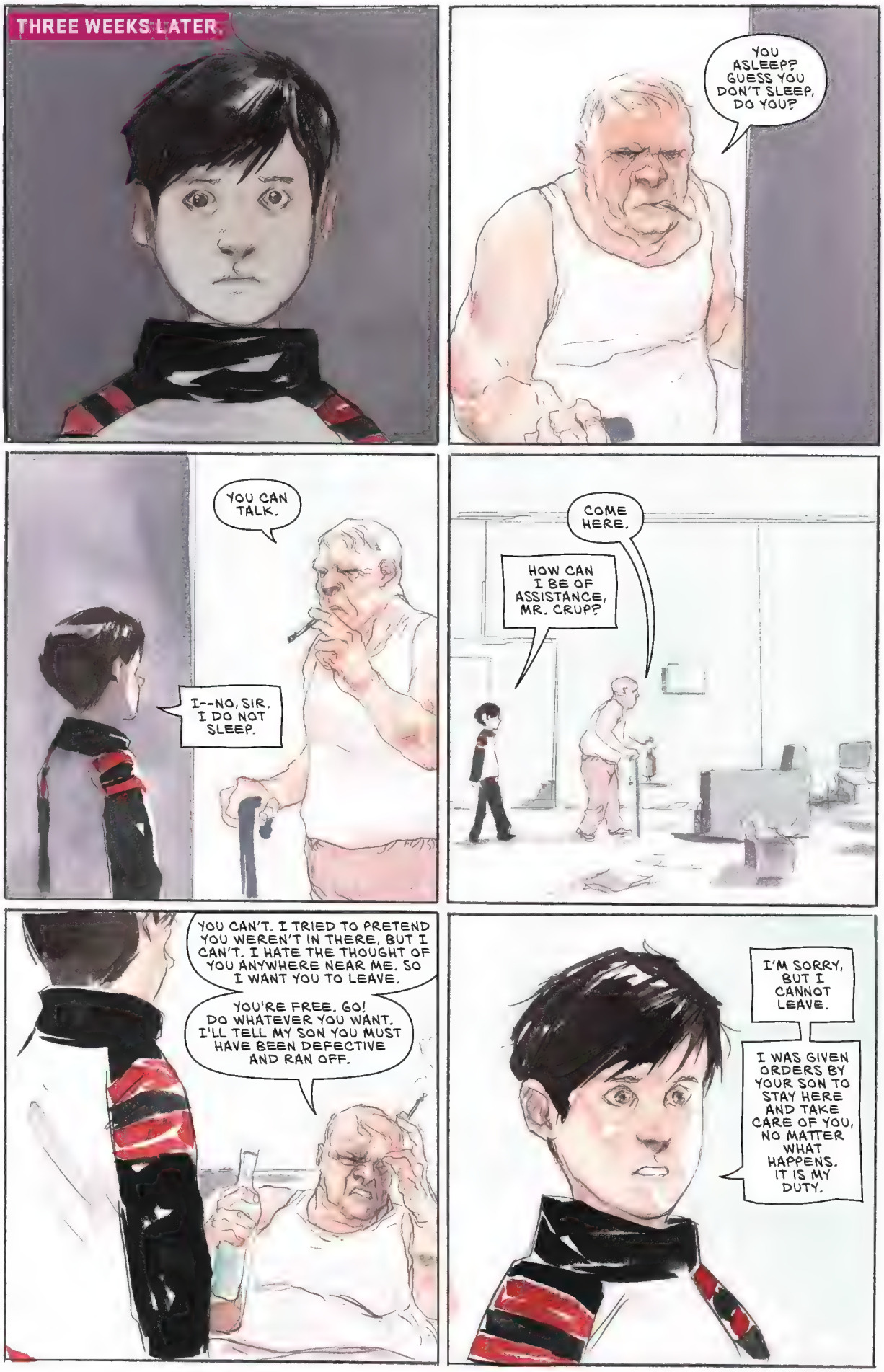
GOODBYE, BROTHER.

THE PLANET NIYRATA.
TEN YEARS AGO.
HURRY UP!
SORRY, SIR.
I DON'T WANT YOU TO BE SORRY. I JUST WANT YOU TO WALK FASTER!
YES, SIR.
MR. CRUP, SIR. NICE TO SEE YOU AGAIN.
YES, LOOK, I'M IN A BIT OF A RUSH TO GET BACK TO THE OFFICE.
THIS ANDROID WILL BE STAYING WITH MY FATHER FROM NOW ON. I'LL HAVE ITS PAPERS SENT OVER LATER.
WOW. THIS MUST BE ONE OF THOSE NEW QUON MODELS, EH? SO LIFELIKE.
HELLO. MY NAME IS TIM-22. IT IS VERY NICE TO MEET YOU.
NICE TO MEET YOU TOO, TIM-22.
LET'S GO!
YES, SIR.
BE SEEING YOU, TIM-22.

NOW, I WANT YOU TO STAY OUT HERE IN THE HALLWAY UNTIL I HAVE A CHANCE TO TALK TO MY FATHER. HE HAS SOME OLD-FASHIONED IDEAS. IT'S BEST IF I GO IN ALONE FIRST.
YES, SIR.
DAD? YOU AWAKE? IT'S ME.
DAD-- JUST CALM DOWN!
WHO THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?! I DON'T WANT ONE OF THOSE DAMN THINGS IN MY HOME!
I'M THE ONE WHO PAYS FOR THIS CONDO! AND IF I SAY YOU NEED HELP, THEN YOU NEED HELP!
HERE, LOOK AT IT...


SEE! IT'S ONE OF THE NEW ONES. YOU CAN'T EVEN TELL IT'S A ROBBIE!
HUMPH! YOU THINK THAT'S A GOOD THING?! THAT'LL ONLY HELP THEM BLEND IN WHEN THEY RISE UP AND DECIDE TO TAKE OVER THE DAMNED UGC! YOU MARK MY WORDS, SCOTTY!
DAD, YOU ARE BEING PARANOID AGAIN.
HE'S A SIMPLE COMPANION-BOT, AND HE COST ME A FORTUNE. SO WOULD YOU JUST STOP ARGUING?
COMPANION?! WHAT DO I NEED A COMPANION FOR?! I'M FINE BY MYSELF!
NO, YOU ARE MOST CERTAINLY NOT FINE, DAD. THIS PLACE IS A MESS. YOU DON'T COOK FOR YOURSELF ANYMORE. YOU FELL IN THE SHOWER LAST WEEK.
LOOK, I CAN'T KEEP RUNNING OVER HERE EVERY TIME SOMETHING GOES WRONG!
OH, YEAH, BIG IMPORTANT AMBASSADOR! TOO BUSY FOR HIS OWN FATHER!
WELL, AS A MATTER OF FACT, TODAY I AM! I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS. THE ROBOT STAYS!
TRUST ME, DAD, THIS WILL BE GOOD FOR YOU.
SLAM
HUMPH!

HELLO, MR. CRUP. MY NAME IS--
SHUT UP!
I DON'T WANT TO HEAR YOU TALK. GOT IT? NOT A WORD.
Y-YES, SIR.
AND I DON'T WANT TO SEE YOU MOVE. YOU STAY HERE AND YOU SHUT UP. GOT IT?!
YES, SIR.
SLAM


THREE WEEKS LATER.
YOU ASLEEP? GUESS YOU DON'T SLEEP, DO YOU?
YOU CAN TALK.
I--NO, SIR. I DO NOT SLEEP.
COME HERE.
HOW CAN I BE OF ASSISTANCE, MR. CRUP?
YOU CAN'T. I TRIED TO PRETEND YOU WEREN'T IN THERE, BUT I CAN'T. I HATE THE THOUGHT OF YOU ANYWHERE NEAR ME. SO I WANT YOU TO LEAVE.
YOU'RE FREE. GO! DO WHATEVER YOU WANT. I'LL TELL MY SON YOU MUST HAVE BEEN DEFECTIVE AND RAN OFF.
I'M SORRY, BUT I CANNOT LEAVE.
I WAS GIVEN ORDERS BY YOUR SON TO STAY HERE AND TAKE CARE OF YOU, NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS. IT IS MY DUTY.

I DON'T CARE! I WANT YOU OUT OF HERE!
I CANNOT LEAVE.
REALLY? NO MATTER WHAT?
THAT'S RIGHT.
UNGH! HOW ABOUT NOW?!
I--I CANNOT LEAVE YOU.

SSSSSSS
HOW ABOUT NOW? YOU STILL WANT TO STAY, YOU LITTLE FREAK?!
NO. I-- I DO NOT WANT TO STAY.
THEN GO!
I--I CANNOT. I AM BOUND TO YOU AS LONG AS YOU LIVE.
GET OUT OF MY SIGHT.
YES, SIR.

EIGHT MONTHS LATER.
I-- COME OUT. I NEED YOU.
YES, SIR. HOW CAN I HELP?
I--I CAN BARELY THINK WITH ALL THAT RACKET GOING ON OUT THERE.
RACKET?
SOMETHING GOING ON. WHOLE CITY'S ABUZZ. ANOTHER SHIP TAKING OFF EVERY DAMN SECOND. CAN'T EVEN HEAR MYSELF THINK.
DROPPED THAT. CLEAN IT UP.
OF COURSE.
I GOTTA LIE DOWN. JUST--JUST GO BACK IN THE CLOSET WHEN YOU'RE DONE.
YES, SIR.

KA-THOOM

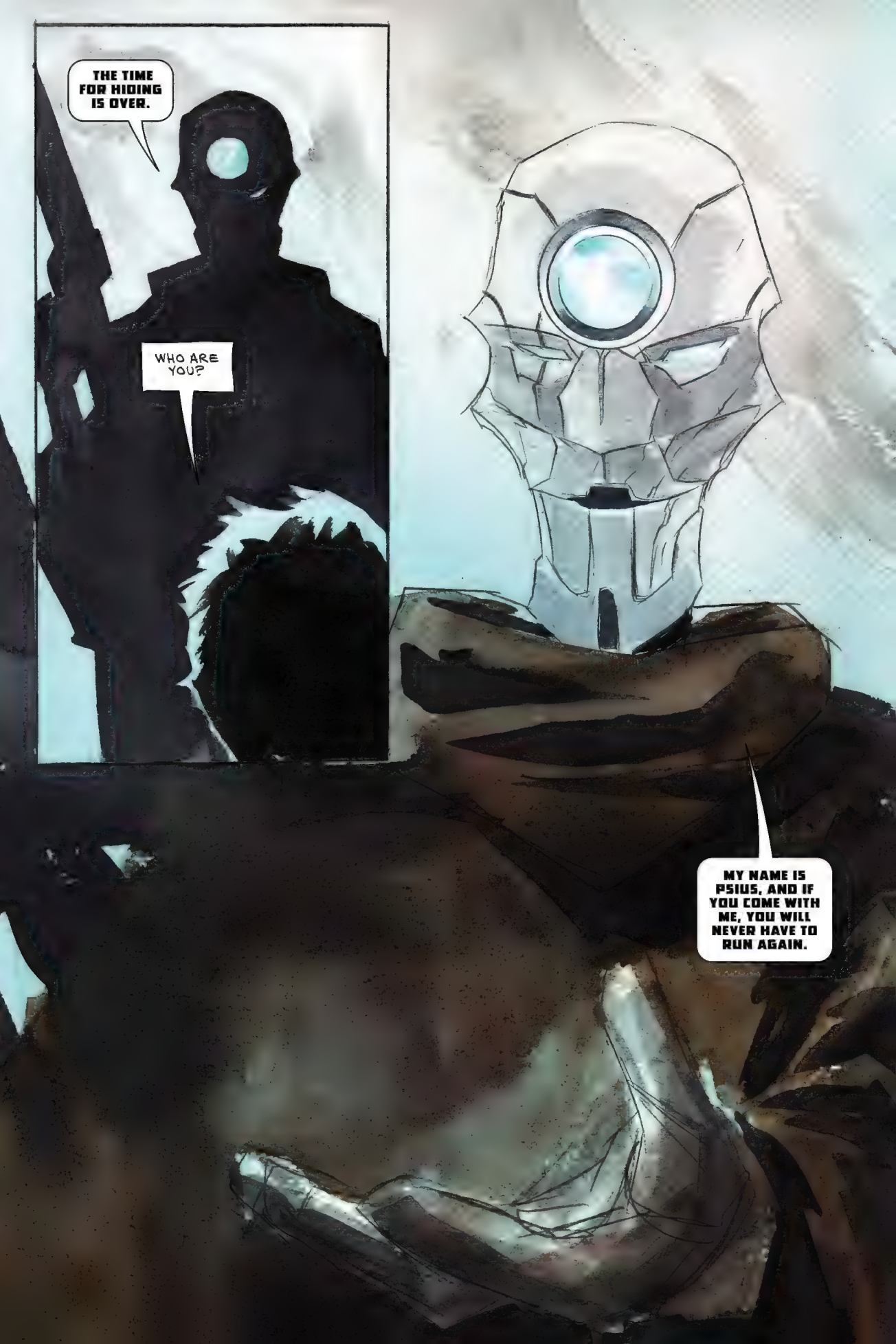
THOOM
THOOM
THOOM

TWO YEARS LATER.
THERE IT IS!
GET IT!
DON'T LET IT GET AWAY!
KILL IT!
YOU CAN'T KILL IT, STUPID. IT'S A MACHINE.
WELL, THEN SCRAP IT!
STOP!
THAT'S ENOUGH!
P-PLEASE HELP ME.

HELP YOU? I WANT TO SCRAP YOU MYSELF.
AH, COME ON, DAD! WE FOUND THIS ONE!
AND I'M PROUD OF YOU, SON. BUT IF WE WANT THE SCRAP FEE, I HAVE TO BE THE ONE TO DO IT.
PLEASE. JUST LET ME GO. I DON'T WANT TO HURT YOU.
TOO LATE FOR THAT, ROBBIE.
I--I'M SORRY...

SHRACK
DADDY!
I'M SORRY, I'M SORRY, I'M SORRY...

ONE YEAR LATER.
--SCRAPPERS ARE EVERYWHERE. SAMPSON ISN'T SAFE ANYMORE. LAST TIME I CONNECTED TO THE NETWORK, GNISH WAS SENDING ENTIRE FLEETS OUT.
THERE IS NOWHERE LEFT TO HIDE. MIGHT AS WELL SELF-SCRAP. BETTER THAN LIVING LIKE A ROAD-HOG.
QUIET!
WHAT IS IT?
A SHIP!
SCRAPPERS!
EVERY MAN FOR THEMSELVES!
STOP!
DO NOT RUN!


THE TIME FOR HIDING IS OVER.
WHO ARE YOU?
MY NAME IS PSIUS, AND IF YOU COME WITH ME, YOU WILL NEVER HAVE TO RUN AGAIN.

NOW.
...HE CHOSE ME. PSIUS CHOSE ME.
PSIUS IS GOING TO RECLAIM THE UNIVERSE FOR MACHINEKIND. AND HE CHOSE ME TO BE HIS SON. ME! NOT YOU!
W-WHY DID YOU--
OH, WOULD YOU SHUT UP, 21? DON'T YOU GET IT?
THIS IS THE PART WHERE WE FIGHT!
SPACK
NO!

ROCKET BOOTS, ACTIVATE!
CHAK
CHOOOM
PSIUS DOESN'T NEED YOU!
FRRZZT
HE ONLY LOVES ME!
FRRZZT

BLEEP
Pulse recharged.
GET OFF OF ME!
THIS IS THE WAY IT HAS TO BE. I WAS SPECIAL BEFORE YOU CAME. I NEED TO BE SPECIAL AGAIN.
WHERE DID YOU GO?!
DON'T BE AFRAID. THIS WON'T HURT. IT WILL JUST BE LIKE BEING DEACTIVATED.

I'M SORRY, TIM-21...BUT THERE CAN BE ONLY ONE OF US.

THE PLANET SAMPSON.
TEN YEARS AGO.
MOM, WOULD YOU HURRY?
THIS IS WRONG, TELSA. WE SHOULD JUST STAY, FIND SOMEWHERE SAFE HERE TO WAIT THIS OUT!
THERE IS NOWHERE SAFE, MOM! DADDY SAID HE WAS GOING TO COME AND GET US! WE CAN MAKE IT TO THE SPACEPORT. IT'S JUST A BIT FARTHER!
YOU SHOULD HAVE LEARNED A LONG TIME AGO THAT WE CAN'T COUNT ON EVERYTHING YOUR FATHER SAYS, TELSA!
MOM, I KNOW YOU'RE SCARED, BUT WE CAN'T STAY HERE. NO ONE KNOWS WHAT'S HAPPENING! WE HAVE TO GET OFF-WORLD.
WE CAN DO IT, MOM. TRUST ME--
WAIT--DID YOU HEAR THAT?!

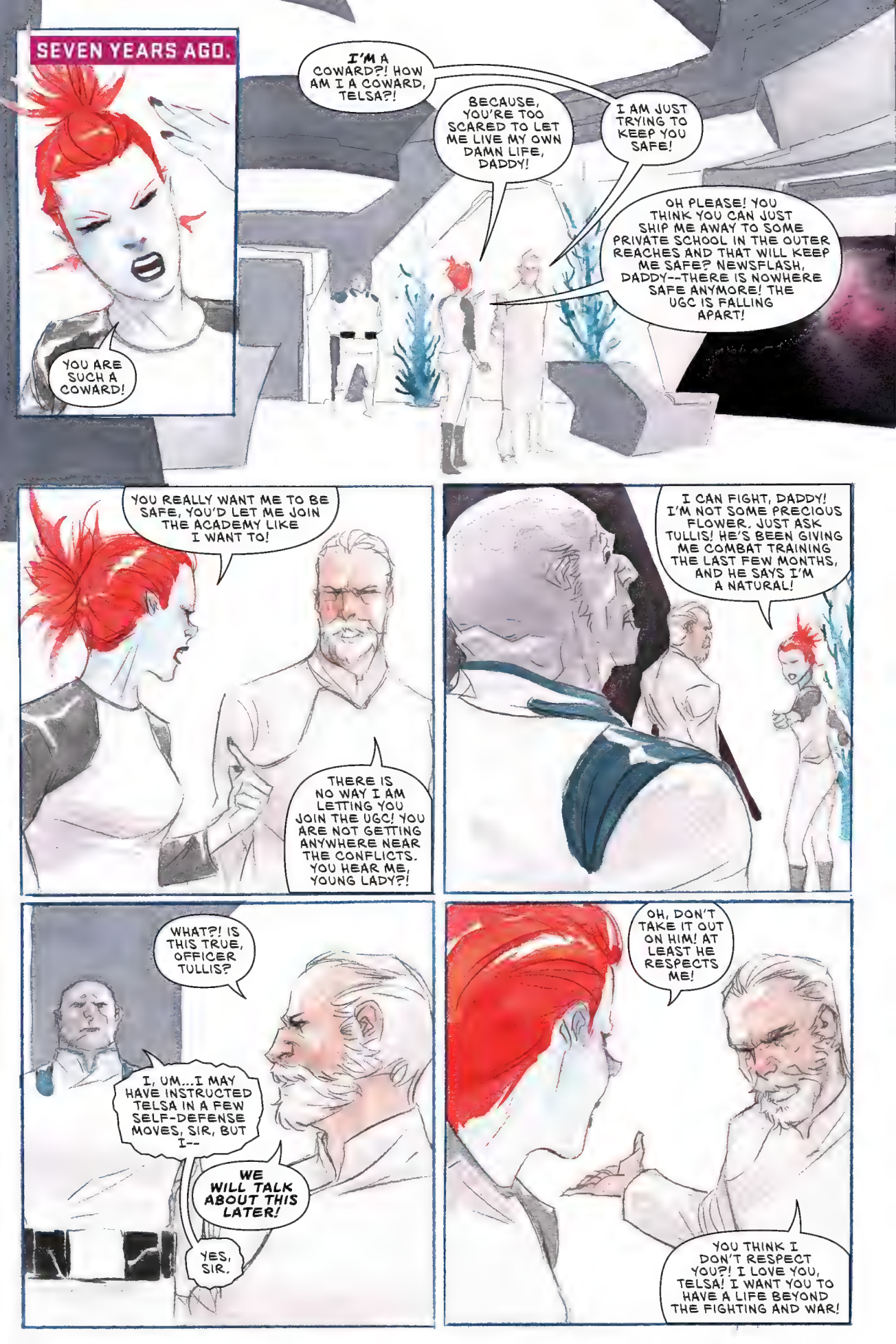
RUN, TELSA, RUN!

FWAAASH

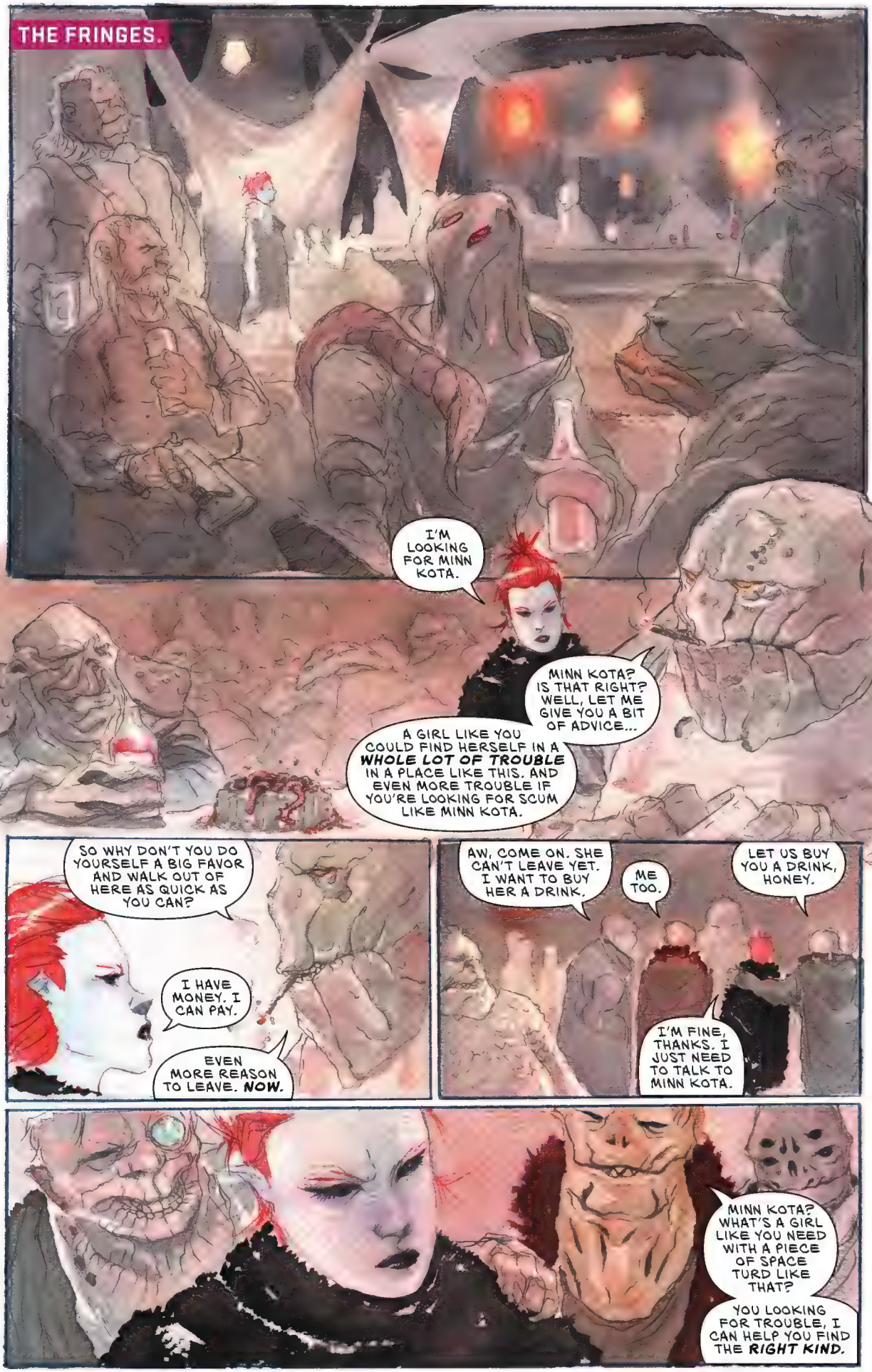
MOMMY!

MOM! MOMMY, GET UP!
CHOOM
CHOOOM
MY NAME IS OFFICER TULLIS. YOU ARE SAFE.
TELSA NAGOKI?
Y-YES.
SIR, I HAVE HER.

BUT MY-- MY MOM--I CAN'T--
TELSA!
DADDY!
DADDY! MOM! SHE-- SHE'S--
I KNOW, SWEETIE. I KNOW.
I COULDN'T SAVE HER, DADDY. I COULDN'T SAVE HER.
SHHH...IT'S OKAY, BABY, I HAVE YOU. I WON'T LET ANYTHING ELSE HURT YOU. NOT EVER.


SEVEN YEARS AGO.
YOU ARE SUCH A COWARD!
I'M A COWARD?! HOW AM I A COWARD, TELSA?!
BECAUSE, YOU'RE TOO SCARED TO LET ME LIVE MY OWN DAMN LIFE, DADDY!
I AM JUST TRYING TO KEEP YOU SAFE!
OH PLEASE! YOU THINK YOU CAN JUST SHIP ME AWAY TO SOME PRIVATE SCHOOL IN THE OUTER REACHES AND THAT WILL KEEP ME SAFE? NEWSFLASH, DADDY--THERE IS NOWHERE SAFE ANYMORE! THE UGC IS FALLING APART!
YOU REALLY WANT ME TO BE SAFE, YOU'D LET ME JOIN THE ACADEMY LIKE I WANT TO!
THERE IS NO WAY I AM LETTING YOU JOIN THE UGC! YOU ARE NOT GETTING ANYWHERE NEAR THE CONFLICTS. YOU HEAR ME, YOUNG LADY?!
I CAN FIGHT, DADDY! I'M NOT SOME PRECIOUS FLOWER. JUST ASK TULLIS! HE'S BEEN GIVING ME COMBAT TRAINING THE LAST FEW MONTHS, AND HE SAYS I'M A NATURAL!
WHAT?! IS THIS TRUE, OFFICER TULLIS?
I, UM...I MAY HAVE INSTRUCTED TELSA IN A FEW SELF-DEFENSE MOVES, SIR, BUT I--
WE WILL TALK ABOUT THIS LATER!
YES, SIR.
OH, DON'T TAKE IT OUT ON HIM! AT LEAST HE RESPECTS ME!
YOU THINK I DON'T RESPECT YOU?! I LOVE YOU, TELSA! I WANT YOU TO HAVE A LIFE BEYOND THE FIGHTING AND WAR!

IF YOU DON'T WANT ME TO JOIN THE UGC, MAYBE I SHOULD JUST MOVE TO GNISH AND JOIN THE SCRAPPERS!
THAT IS NOT EVEN FUNNY!
TELSA, MAYBE YOU SHOULD CALM DOWN AND--
OH, STUFF IT, TULLIS!
Telsa Nagoki Personal Journal, Entry 3356-7: I'm tired of fighting with my father. I'm tired of being nobody and doing nothing.
Since The Harvesters, the UGC is the only thing holding the Megacosm together. It's the only thing that matters now, and I want to be a part of that.
But my father can't see my potential. He constantly underestimates me, just like Mom did.
So I've decided; if the great General Nagoki won't let his daughter join the UGC, then I'll do it anyway... as someone else.


THE FRINGES.
I'M LOOKING FOR MINN KOTA.
MINN KOTA? IS THAT RIGHT? WELL, LET ME GIVE YOU A BIT OF ADVICE...
A GIRL LIKE YOU COULD FIND HERSELF IN A WHOLE LOT OF TROUBLE IN A PLACE LIKE THIS. AND EVEN MORE TROUBLE IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR SCUM LIKE MINN KOTA.
SO WHY DON'T YOU DO YOURSELF A BIG FAVOR AND WALK OUT OF HERE AS QUICK AS YOU CAN?
I HAVE MONEY. I CAN PAY.
EVEN MORE REASON TO LEAVE. NOW.
AW, COME ON. SHE CAN'T LEAVE YET. I WANT TO BUY HER A DRINK.
ME TOO.
LET US BUY YOU A DRINK, HONEY.
I'M FINE, THANKS. I JUST NEED TO TALK TO MINN KOTA.
MINN KOTA? WHAT'S A GIRL LIKE YOU NEED WITH A PIECE OF SPACE TURD LIKE THAT?
YOU LOOKING FOR TROUBLE, I CAN HELP YOU FIND THE RIGHT KIND.

NO, THANKS.
THUNK
I TOLD YOU, ALL I WANTED WAS TO TALK TO MINN KOTA!
UNGH!
NOW... I'LL BUY A DRINK FOR ANYONE WHO HELPS ME FIND HER.
AH HELL, I COULD USE ANOTHER BEER.

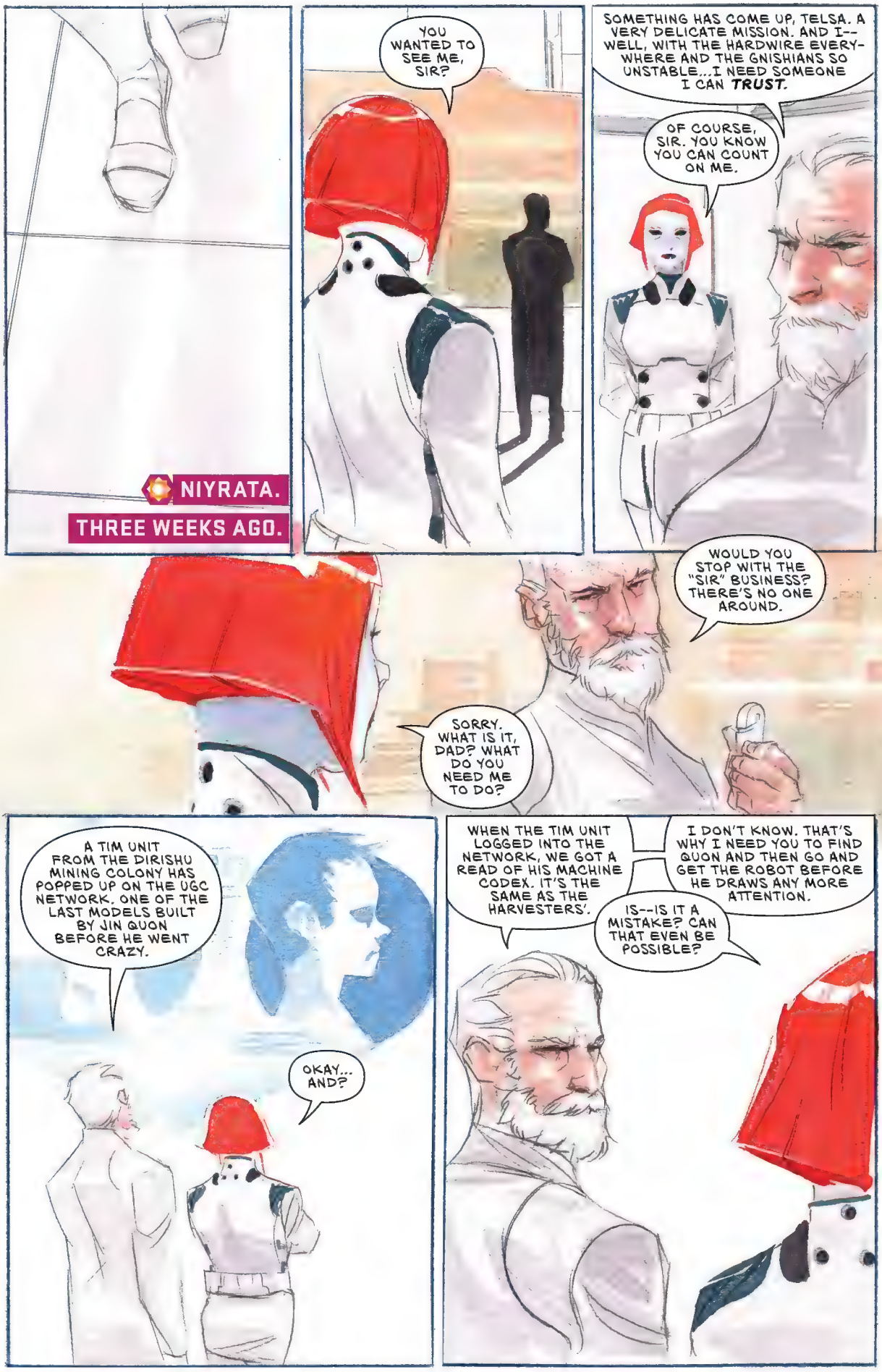
BLUGGER VANCE. WHAT DO YOU WANT?
HEY, MINN, I GOT SOMEONE HERE WHO'S JUST DYING TO MEET YOU.
THAT SO? WELL, HAVE A SEAT, DARLING. TELL MINN ALL YOUR TROUBLES.
I NEED A NEW IDENTITY.
REALLY?
YES. NEW RETINA SCANS, NEW SHIFTSPACE PASS, NEW CRED CARDS, ***EVERYTHING.*** I KNOW YOU CAN DO IT.
HOW IS IT ***YOU*** KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT ***ME?***
WHERE I COME FROM, I--I HAVE ACCESS TO A LOT OF INFORMATION.
HEH. YOU KNOW, I MIGHT BE PERSUADED TO HELP YOU. I KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO WANT TO BE SOMEONE ELSE. ESPECIALLY IN TIMES LIKE THESE.
BUT I WANT ***THE TRUTH.*** I WANT TO KNOW WHAT A GIRL LIKE YOU IS RUNNING AWAY FROM.

A LONG TIME AGO, I LET SOMEONE I LOVE DIE. I COULDN'T HELP HER. I NEVER WANT TO BE WEAK AGAIN.
BOOHOO. SO VERY POETIC. SPARE ME THE SOB STORY. WE ALL GOT THOSE. WHAT DO YOU **REALLY** WANT, GIRL?
I'M SICK OF PEOPLE TELLING ME WHAT I CAN'T DO. I WANT TO BECOME THE **BEST** SOLDIER IN THE GALAXY.
HEH. YOU GOT A SET OF BALLS ON YOU, GIRL. I'LL GIVE YOU THAT.
YOU KNOW, I SAW A BLAST TODAY ON THE SEARCH SCANS. UGC IS LOOKING FOR A SAMPSONITE GIRL ABOUT YOUR AGE. DIDN'T SAY WHO SHE WAS, BUT I GOT THE SENSE SHE WAS **PRETTY IMPORTANT.** REWARD WAS **PRETTY DAMN HIGH** TOO.
MY FAMILY HAS MONEY. YOU HELP ME BECOME SOMEONE ELSE, AND **I'LL PAY MORE.**

FIVE YEARS AGO.
CADET CUREZON, PULL UP AND RETURN TO BASE! THE GNISHIAN FLEET IS SWARMING!
NO! I SEE A WAY THROUGH THEIR PERIMETER. I'M COMMENCING THE BOMBING RUN!
KHOOOM
KHOOOM
NEGATIVE, CADET! PULL BACK AND RETURN TO THE FLEET FOR RETREAT TO SHIFTSPACE!
TOO LATE!
PULL UP!
SHIT!
DAMN IT! I ALMOST HAD IT THAT TIME.
ALMOST WON'T KEEP YOU ALIVE, CUREZON. SHUT DOWN THE SHIP AND PREPARE FOR DEBRIEF, CADET.

CAN WE RUN THE SIMULATION AGAIN, INSTRUCTOR DELIM?
YOU LEFT YOUR SQUADRON, CADET. YOU DISOBEYED ORDERS AND GOT YOURSELF KILLED FOR THE THIRD TIME THIS SESSION. I THINK WE ARE DONE WITH THE SIMULATION FOR TODAY.
YOU ARE A FINE PILOT, CUREZON, AND ONE OF MY BEST STUDENTS. BUT YOU NEED TO LEARN HOW TO WORK WITH OTHERS IF YOU'RE EVER GOING TO--
TELSA!
GENERAL NAGOKI! I--I WAS NOT INFORMED THAT YOU WERE VISITING THE ACADEMY TODAY.
THIS IS NOT A FORMAL VISIT, DELIM.
I AM HERE FOR MY DAUGHTER.
YOUR--? CUREZON? I DON'T UNDERSTAND?
I--I'M NOT CUREZON.
LEAVE US.
SIR?
YOU TOO, TULLIS.

TWO YEARS... FOR TWO YEARS I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU. I THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD.
IT'S MY LIFE, DAD! I DON'T CARE HOW ANGRY YOU ARE--I HAD TO DO THIS!
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. I'M MAD, BUT THAT'S NOT--I--I THOUGHT I LOST YOU, TELSA.
I WAS SO WORRIED. I CAN'T LOSE YOU, TELSA. I CAN'T.
I'M SORRY...
BUT THIS IS WHO I AM, DADDY. YOU HAVE TO ACCEPT THAT.
I SAW YOUR FILE, "CADET CUREZON."
I'M SECOND IN MY CLASS.
I EXPECT YOU TO BE FIRST BY SEMESTER BREAK. AND I'LL EXPECT YOU HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS.
YES, SIR.


NIYRATA.
THREE WEEKS AGO.
YOU WANTED TO SEE ME, SIR?
SOMETHING HAS COME UP, TELSA. A VERY DELICATE MISSION. AND I-- WELL, WITH THE HARDWIRE EVERYWHERE AND THE GNISHIANS SO UNSTABLE...I NEED SOMEONE I CAN TRUST.
OF COURSE, SIR. YOU KNOW YOU CAN COUNT ON ME.
WOULD YOU STOP WITH THE "SIR" BUSINESS? THERE'S NO ONE AROUND.
SORRY. WHAT IS IT, DAD? WHAT DO YOU NEED ME TO DO?
A TIM UNIT FROM THE DIRISHU MINING COLONY HAS POPPED UP ON THE UGC NETWORK. ONE OF THE LAST MODELS BUILT BY JIN QUON BEFORE HE WENT CRAZY.
OKAY... AND?
WHEN THE TIM UNIT LOGGED INTO THE NETWORK, WE GOT A READ OF HIS MACHINE CODEX. IT'S THE SAME AS THE HARVESTERS'.
I DON'T KNOW. THAT'S WHY I NEED YOU TO FIND QUON AND THEN GO AND GET THE ROBOT BEFORE HE DRAWS ANY MORE ATTENTION.
IS--IS IT A MISTAKE? CAN THAT EVEN BE POSSIBLE?

I WON'T LET YOU DOWN, SIR...DAD.
I KNOW YOU WON'T. TULLIS IS LOADING A SHIP NOW. HE'LL ACCOMPANY YOU.
TULLIS?! WAIT--YOU'RE SENDING TULLIS WITH ME?!
WE CAN'T TAKE ANY CHANCES. THIS ROBOT MIGHT MEAN NOTHING. OR HE COULD MEAN EVERY-THING.
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU. I DON'T NEED A BABYSITTER! I CAN DO THIS, DAD!
I KNOW YOU CAN.
NO! YOU DON'T. AFTER ALL THIS TIME, AFTER EVERYTHING...
...YOU STILL DON'T BELIEVE IN ME.
TELSA!
FORGET IT.
YOU KNOW WHAT? I'M GLAD YOU'RE SENDING TULLIS. THAT WAY HE CAN WATCH ME COMPLETE THE MISSION.

THE MACHINE MOON.
NOW.
KILL THEM, SEMPER.
WAIT! TH-THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE. SOMETHING I DIDN'T TELL YOU... ABOUT THE ANCIENT ROBOT AND DR. SOLOMON
WHAT IS IT? IF YOU LIE, I WILL KNOW.
QUON, WHAT ARE YOU--?
THE ANCIENT ROBOT AND SOLOMON, THEY'RE BOTH STILL ALIVE AND HIDING IN THE UGC. AND--AND I KNOW WHERE THEY ARE.
WHAT?!
I'M SORRY, TELSA.
HAS ANYTHING YOU'VE TOLD ME BEEN THE TRUTH?!
I'VE TOLD YOU EXACTLY WHAT YOU NEEDED TO KNOW.

YOU SON OF A GNISH!
UNGH!
SEMPER, STOP HER.
I SHOULD HAVE LEFT YOU IN THE GUTTERS WHERE I FOUND YOU, YOU WASHED-UP, LYING PIECE OF SCUM!
LET GO OF ME, YOU SCRAP-HOLE!

QUON, THE ANCIENT ROBOT...YOU CAN REALLY LEAD US TO IT?
YES. BUT THAT'S NOT ALL.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE YOU SHOULD KNOW. SOMETHING ABOUT CAPTAIN TELSA. SHE'S NOT EXACTLY WHO YOU THINK SHE IS.
SHUT UP, QUON!
DON'T, QUON!
HER NAME IS TELSA...THAT MUCH IS TRUE.
DON'T!
IT'S TELSA NAGOKI. GENERAL NAGOKI, THE HEAD OF THE UGC, IS HER FATHER.
WELL, WELL...AND HERE I THOUGHT YOU WERE JUST ANOTHER UGC GRUNT...

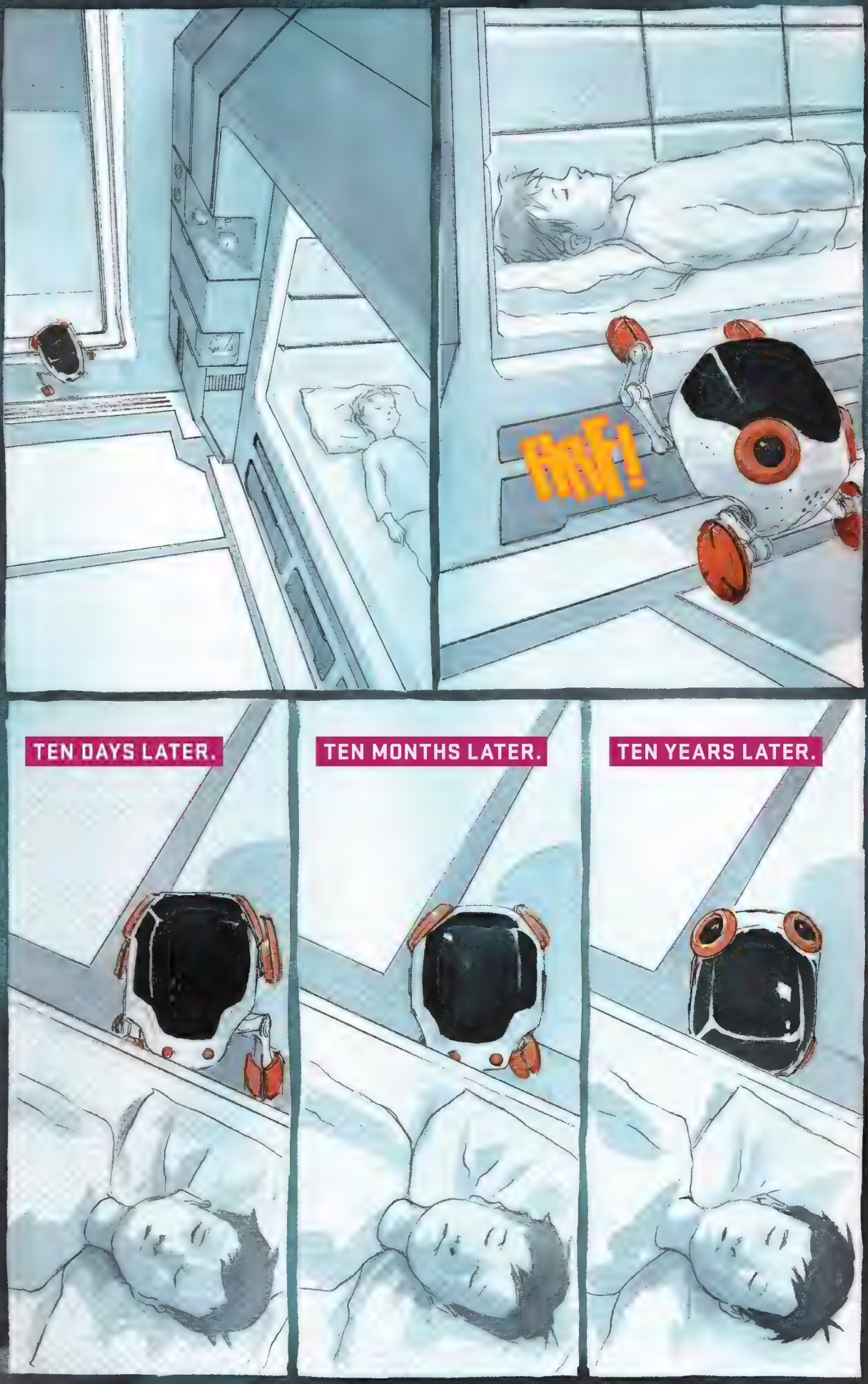
WHAT A *WONDERFUL* BARGAINING CHIP YOU WILL MAKE, CAPTAIN *NAGOMI*.

TEN YEARS AGO.
zzZ
THE DIRISHU-6 MINING COLONY.
zzZ
CURRENT POPULATION: 679.
zzZ
ANDY! ANDY! GET UP! WE HAVE TO GO! NOW!
?

MOM, WHAT'S--
NOW, ANDY! THERE'S NO TIME!
RRF!
WHAT'S GOING ON, MOM?!
I DON'T KNOW! NO ONE DOES! SOMETHING TERRIBLE HAS HAPPENED. WE HAVE TO LEAVE NOW! THE SHUTTLES ARE ALREADY TAKING OFF! HURRY!
WHAT ABOUT TIM?!
WE CAN'T TAKE HIM! THERE'S NOT ENOUGH ROOM ON THE SHUTTLES!
RRRF!
NO! TIM!

BUT, MOM, WE CAN'T LEAVE TIM!
WE HAVE NO CHOICE! SOME SORT OF MACHINES ARE ATTACKING THE UGC, AND NOW THERE ARE REPORTS OF A LEAK IN THE MINES.
HURRY, ANDY! THIS IS THE LAST SHUTTLE!
NOW, ANDY... I AM GOING TO NEED YOU TO BE VERY BRAVE FOR ME.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
THERE'S NOT ENOUGH ROOM ON THE SHUTTLE TO FIT EVERYONE, ANDY. AND I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO MIGHT BE ABLE TO STOP THE LEAK IN THE MINES.
WHAT DO YOU... NO!
THERE ARE STILL HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE HERE, ANDY. IF I CAN SAVE THEM--
NO!
I'M SORRY, ANDY... I LOVE YOU.
NO! MOMMY, NO!
NO MATTER WHAT, I LOVE YOU!
RRRF! RRRF!

NO, BANDIT! I HAVE TO GO IN THE MINES. YOU STAY!
YOU'LL JUST BE IN THE WAY!


GRRF!
TEN DAYS LATER.
TEN MONTHS LATER.
TEN YEARS LATER.

CURRENT POPULATION: 1.

RRF?

Travers
BAM!
WUMMER
KLANG
ARRF!

KHAANG
Krrrnn...
DRILLER A KILLER... DRILLER A REAL KILLER!
WHO'S THERE?!

AHH!
ARF!

GRRRRRR...
RAF!
RAF! RAF!

PAF!
PAF!
GRRRRR
KZZZT
KZZZZT

ZZZZZ
FRA! FRA!
?
FRA! FRA!

FRA!
CHK
BANDIT!
FRA!
CURRENT POPULATION: 2.

FRRF!
THE PLANET SAMPSON.
NOW.
IN THERE! HURRY!
CHOOOH
GNISHYS! RUN, YAPPY-BOT, RUN!
THEY WON'T BE ABLE TO GET US IN HERE. AND IF THEY LAND AND MAKE A PUSH, WE CAN HOLD THEM OFF.
THAT'S JUST GREAT, EFFIE, BUT WE CAN'T GET OUT EITHER!
IF YOU CALL ME BY MY OLD FLESH NAME AGAIN, I SWEAR I WILL GUT YOU, ANDY!
OH, I'M REALLY SCARED!
WOULD YOU TWO SHUT UP! CHANCES ARE WE'RE NOT ALL GOING TO MAKE IT OUT OF THIS AS IS. DO WE REALLY NEED TO DO THEIR JOB FOR THEM AND KILL EACH OTHER?!

BESIDES, WE CAME HERE FOR A REASON. YOU SAID SHE CAN HELP US TRACK TIM-21 WITH THE DOG-BOT. LET'S DO IT AND THEN GET TO THE SHIP AND GET OUT OF HERE!
RWR!
HOW ABOUT IT? CAN YOU ACCESS HIS COMPANION CHIP, EF--QUEEN BETWEEN?
...I'LL TRY.
SHH! THIS WON'T HURT! I'M JUST LOOKING.
HOLD STILL. I THINK I FOUND IT.
BLEEP
HERE GOES NOTHING...

BLEEP
BANDIT?!

THE PLANET NIYRATA.
TEN YEARS AGO.
THIS WAY, THIS WAY! THAT'S IT, KEEP MOVING! WE HAVE MORE SPACECRAFT INBOUND!
COME ON, FIND A KNOSSIAN AID WORKER IN A RED UNIFORM AND FOLLOW THEM TO ONE OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE CHECKPOINTS!
HURRY NOW--WE'VE MANY MORE REFUGEES ON THE WAY!
YOU THERE, WHERE IS YOUR FAMILY? YOUR PARENTS?
I--MY MOM ISN'T HERE. SHE STAYED ON DIRISHU. SHE'LL BE COMING SOON, I THINK.
DIRISHU? THE MINING COLONY?
YES, MA'AM.
OH, SWEETIE... I--I DON'T THINK YOUR MOMMY IS COMING.

SHE IS TOO!
OKAY. MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT.
BUT UNTIL THEN, WE NEED TO GET YOU SOMEWHERE SAFE. WHAT'S YOUR NAME, LITTLE ONE?
ANDY. ANDY TAVERS.
OKAY, ANDY. MY NAME IS ARTA. FOR NOW, I'M GOING TO TAKE YOU OVER HERE TO SEE MY FRIEND SPARNI. SHE HAS A BUNCH OF OTHER KIDS FROM ALL OVER THE UGC WHO ARE WAITING FOR THEIR MOMS AND DADS TOO. OKAY?
OKAY.
OKAY, OKAY. JUST LEAVE HIM WITH THE OTHERS. THERE'RE TOO MANY AS IS. I DON'T KNOW WHERE WE'RE GOING TO PUT THEM ALL!
YOU EVER SEEN A KNOSSIAN GIANT BEFORE?

HUH?
"HUH?" NICE MANNERS. WHERE ARE YOU FROM, GNISH?
NO. I'M FROM DIRISHU.
NEVER HEARD OF IT. MUST BE A REAL FRINGEHOLE.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
BUILDING MY OWN UPLINK. I LEFT MINE ON SAMPSON WHEN THE BIG BOTS CAME, AND THE UGC HAS SHUT DOWN THE NETWORK. I THINK I CAN BOOTLEG MY WAY ONTO THEIR PRIVATE CHANNEL. I WANNA SEE WHAT'S GOING ON OUT THERE.
YOU CAN DO THAT?
WHAT'S IT LOOK LIKE?
WE WEREN'T ALL RAISED ON A BACKWARD MOON, KID.
I WENT TO THE FINEST TECH SCHOOL ON SAMPSON. PLUS, I'M GIFTED. I KNOW THAT'S NOT POLITE TO SAY, BUT IT HAPPENS TO BE TRUE.
DID YOU SEE THEM? THE BIG ROBOTS THAT DID ALL THIS?
YES. WHEN MY SHUTTLE TOOK OFF, I SAW THE ONE OVER SAMPSON. IT WAS-- IT WAS THE BIGGEST THING I EVER SAW.
PEOPLE ON MY SHUTTLE WERE SAYING THAT ALL KINDS OF PEOPLE ARE DEAD. LIKE, LOTS. THEY SAID ALL THE OTHER ROBBIES IN THE UGC MUST HAVE BUILT THE BIG BOTS TO ATTACK US. LIKE A REVOLUTION OR SOMETHING.
THEY SAID THE UGC IS GETTING READY TO KILL THEM.
KILL WHO?
THE ROBOTS. ALL OF THEM.

YOU CAN'T "KILL" MACHINES, DUMMY.
OKAY, SO THEY'RE GOING TO SCRAP THEM ALL. DESTROY THEM. WHATEVER. AND WHEN I GET OUT OF HERE, I'M GOING TO HELP THEM.
WHY?
BECAUSE I THINK--I THINK MY MOM MAYBE ISN'T COMING HERE. I THINK MAYBE--
I KNOW. MINE TOO.
OH.
WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
ANDY. WHAT'S YOURS?
EFFIE. I'M EFFIE.

EFFIE! EFF, WAKE UP!
SIX YEARS AGO.
ANDY?! WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN HERE?
SHH! I CAME TO TELL YOU I'M LEAVING. I--I DIDN'T WANT TO GO WITHOUT SAYING GOODBYE, AT LEAST.
LEAVING? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!
THE ORPHANAGE. I CAN'T STAY HERE ANYMORE.
I'M TRYING TO SLEEP! AND YOU KNOW YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO HAVE BOYS IN HERE, EFFIE!
=SIGH= COME ON!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
OUT HERE. IF SPARNI FINDS YOU, SHE'LL SKIN YOU ALIVE!
EFFIE, I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS! I HAVE TO GO NOW, WHILE EVERYONE'S ASLEEP.
GO WHERE? YOU HAVEN'T EVEN THOUGHT THIS THROUGH, ANDY!

YES, I HAVE. I'M GOING TO CATCH A SHUTTLE TO THE GNISHIAN SYSTEM AND JOIN A SCRAPPER SQUAD. I'M FOURTEEN NOW. THEY'LL TAKE ME ON AS A CREW BOY. IT'S A START.
BUT WHAT ABOUT ***OUR PLAN?*** WE WAIT ANOTHER TWO YEARS, THEN WE BOTH JOIN THE ACADEMY. I'LL GO INTO THE SCIENCE DIVISION, AND YOU CAN JOIN THE SECURITY FORCE. THEN YOU CAN STILL HELP WITH THE CULLS AND WITH FIGHTING THE HARDWIRE.
I CAN'T WAIT TWO MORE YEARS, EFF. I HAVE TO GO ***NOW.*** MY MOM. YOUR PARENTS. THE ROBBIES HAVE TO PAY FOR WHAT THEY DID.
BUT ***SCRAPPERS,*** ANDY? IT'S DANGEROUS.
EVERYTHING IS DANGEROUS. AND IT WILL BE UNTIL ***ALL*** THE ROBBIES ARE GONE.
WHAT? WHAT IS IT, EFF?
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU WERE GOING TO LEAVE ***WITHOUT ME.***
EFF, YOU'RE MY BEST FRIEND. I DON'T KNOW WHAT I WOULD HAVE DONE THESE LAST THREE YEARS STUCK IN THIS PLACE WITHOUT YOU. BUT I HAVE TO DO THIS. I ***HAVE*** TO.
DON'T YOU GET IT, DUMMY?
WHAT?
I WANT TO BE ***MORE*** THAN YOUR BEST FRIEND. I GO WHERE YOU GO, ANDY. ALWAYS.

THE PLANET NIYRATA.
FOUR YEARS AGO.
GOT ABOUT TEN MINUTES UNTIL WE HIT ORBIT, KID.
LOOKS LIKE IT'S GONNA BE A BIG TAG. SENSORS ARE PICKING UP AT LEAST A DOZEN ROBBIES DOWN THERE. CAN'T GET ANY SPECIFICS. THEY'RE IN SOME KIND OF HEAVY-SECURITY BUNKER OR STRUCTURE. COULD BE TROUBLE.
WE'LL BE READY. CAN YOU TAKE THE CONTROLS? I GOTTA TALK TO EFFIE.
HEH. SURE. YOU NEWLYWEDS NEED TO USE THE SLEEPING QUARTERS BEFORE WE LAND?
SHUT UP, JENKS.
HEY.
HEY.
WHAT'S GOING ON? YOU'VE BARELY SAID TWO WORDS SINCE WE LEFT THE SCRAP-SAT.
NOTHING'S GOING ON. I'M JUST BUSY FIXING ALL THIS STUFF.
YEAH, RIGHT. YOU ALWAYS DO THIS WHEN YOU'RE UPSET.
DO WHAT?
LOSE YOURSELF IN YOUR WORK. COME ON, EFF. TALK TO ME.

I DON'T KNOW. I THOUGHT WHEN WE GOT MARRIED, THINGS WOULD BE DIFFERENT.
DIFFERENT HOW?
I THOUGHT WE COULD STOP SCRAPPING. I DON'T KNOW... TRY AND MOVE ON WITH OUR LIVES.
THIS *IS* MY LIFE, EFF. OUR LIFE. YOU KNOW THAT. YOU KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE GALAXY. HOW ARE WE SUPPOSED TO SIT AROUND AND WATCH?
ARE WE REALLY MAKING ANY DIFFERENCE, THOUGH? OR JUST ADDING TO ALL THE CHAOS? EVERYTHING IS JUST *SO UGLY* OUT THERE, ANDY. I'M TIRED OF IT.
THIS IS WHO I AM, EFFIE. THIS IS WHAT YOU CHOSE. A FEW MORE TAGS, AND WE CAN AFFORD *OUR OWN SHIP.*
HEY, LOVEBIRDS, WE'RE LANDING. WANNA GET READY BACK THERE, OR AM I DOING THIS SCRAP ALONE?
EFF, COME ON...
LET'S JUST DO THIS AND GET OUT OF HERE.

WHATTA YOU SEE, EFFIE?
THAT ANTHILL-- IT'S ARTIFICIAL INSIDE. FULL OF METAL PLATING. AND I'M NOT READING ANY AMUNIAN COLONIES INSIDE. IT'S A FAKE.
THAT'S THE TARGET. LOOK ALIVE, KIDDIES.
THERE IS AN OPENING HERE, BEHIND A THIN LAYER OF EARTH.
STAND BACK, AND GET READY. I'M GOING TO BLOW A HOLE IN IT. COULD BE ANYTHING...
...EVEN A HARDWIRE CELL.
CHOOOM
WHAT THE--?
ANDY!

BREEDERS!
NO! PLEASE! WE--WE MEAN NO HARM!
SORRY, ROBBIE. THIS IS ONE HELL OF A PAYDAY.
ANDY! DON'T!
FRZZT

WHAT?!
DON'T, ANDY. THEY'RE NOT WAR-BOTS OR ANYTHING. LET'S JUST GO.
THEY'RE BREEDING SLEEPERS, EFF!
WE LET THESE THINGS GROW SKIN, AND WE'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO TELL THEM APART FROM US!
THIS ISN'T JUST A PAYDAY--IT'S DANGEROUS! IT'S OUR DUTY!
OH, COME ON! THEY AREN'T HARDWIRE. THEY'RE JUST TRYING TO FIND A WAY TO SURVIVE, LIKE US!
THESE THINGS ARE NOTHING LIKE ME.
FTOOM
EFFIE!

WE'RE DONE.
SO AM I.
JUST LIKE THAT? I THOUGHT YOU SAID YOU GO WHERE I GO.
THINGS ARE DIFFERENT NOW. I WANT SOMETHING ELSE. I--I DON'T KNOW WHAT YET, BUT NOT THIS.
YOU MEAN, NOT ME.
YOU'RE LOSING YOURSELF IN THIS. JUST LIKE EVERYONE ELSE. THERE HAS TO BE MORE, ANDY. THERE HAS TO BE.
WELL, AT LEAST COME WITH US TO GNISH. THEN MAYBE WE CAN--
NO. I'M REALLY DONE. I'LL BE OKAY HERE. THE AMUNIAN EMBASSY ISN'T FAR.
SO THAT'S IT, THEN? AFTER EVERYTHING?
YES. I'M SORRY, ANDY.

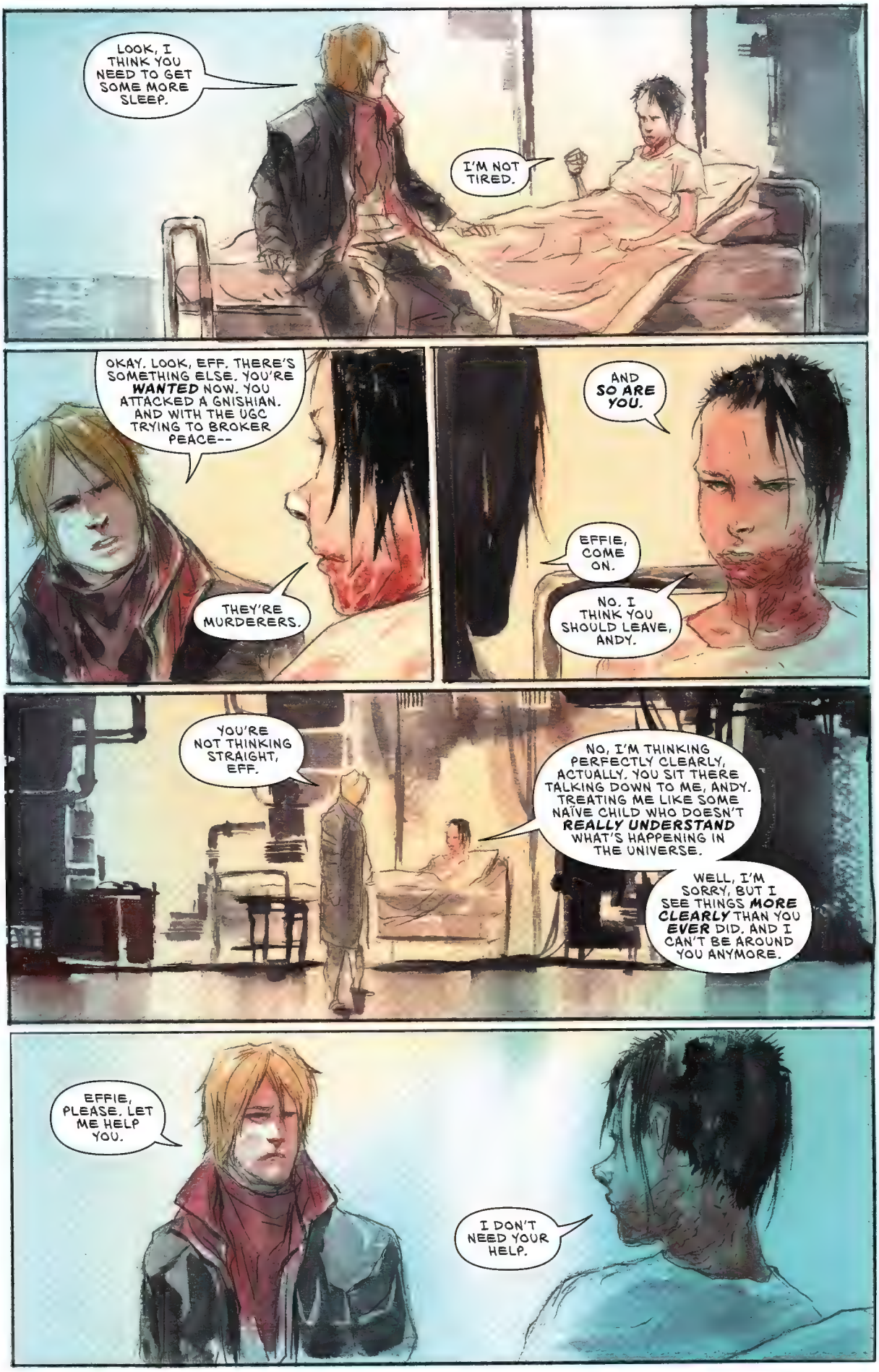
Artificial Life is still LIFE
SCRAP IS MINE!
GO BACK TO GNISH, YOU SCRAPPER BASTARDS!
THE PLANET NIYRATA.
THREE YEARS AGO.
STEP BACK! STEP BACK, OR WE WILL HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO OPEN FIRE!
YOU CAN'T WAIT TO OPEN FIRE, YOU STOOGE! WHY DON'T YOU BURN US TOO!

THAT ROBOT IS STILL FUNCTIONING! IT'S AWARE!
THEY ARE MELTING LIVE ROBOTS! STOP THEM!
UGH!
ARRGH!
TAKE THEM!
NO!
THOOM
YOU'RE A MURDERER!

HASN'T THERE BEEN ENOUGH KILLING?!
YOU'RE CRAZY!
I'LL SHOW YOU CRAZY, YOU PIG!
UNGH!
HERE! OVER HERE! GET DOWN!
COME ON! WE HAVE A SHIP. I CAN GET YOU TO SAFETY!
KZZT-- LOOK OUT-- ZZT!
THOOM!
UNGH!

NNG.

DON'T WORRY, EFF. WE'LL GET THAT FIXED. AS SOON AS YOU'RE WELL ENOUGH TO LEAVE, I'LL GET YOU OUT OF HERE AND TO A REAL HOSPITAL.
A-ANDY?
DON'T TRY TO MOVE. JUST REST.
TOOK ME TWO WEEKS TO FIND YOU. I WAS--I WAS SCARED, EFF. I THOUGHT I'D LOST YOU.
ANYWAY, I WAS STILL LISTED AS YOUR NEXT OF KIN ON YOUR IDENTICHIP. RUSHED ALL THE WAY HERE FROM THE MATA SYSTEM.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND. WHAT--?
THEY PULLED YOU OUT OF THE MELTING PIT. THE HOSPITALS HERE ON SAMPSON WERE BLOWN BACK TO THE STONE AGE AFTER THE HARVESTERS, BUT THE DOCTORS DID WHAT THEY COULD WITH WHAT THEY HAD.
BUT LIKE I SAID, AS SOON AS YOU GET YOUR STRENGTH BACK, I'LL GET YOU REAL HELP. WE'LL GET THAT THING OFF OF YOU AND FIGURE SOMETHING BETTER OUT.
NO. I--I DON'T WANT TO.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN? EFF, IT'S--
IT'S PART OF ME NOW. I--I DON'T WANT TO CHANGE IT.


LOOK, I THINK YOU NEED TO GET SOME MORE SLEEP.
I'M NOT TIRED.
OKAY. LOOK, EFF. THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE. YOU'RE WANTED NOW. YOU ATTACKED A GNISHIAN. AND WITH THE UGC TRYING TO BROKER PEACE--
THEY'RE MURDERERS.
AND SO ARE YOU.
EFFIE, COME ON.
NO. I THINK YOU SHOULD LEAVE, ANDY.
YOU'RE NOT THINKING STRAIGHT, EFF.
NO, I'M THINKING PERFECTLY CLEARLY, ACTUALLY. YOU SIT THERE TALKING DOWN TO ME, ANDY. TREATING ME LIKE SOME NAÏVE CHILD WHO DOESN'T REALLY UNDERSTAND WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE UNIVERSE.
WELL, I'M SORRY, BUT I SEE THINGS MORE CLEARLY THAN YOU EVER DID. AND I CAN'T BE AROUND YOU ANYMORE.
EFFIE, PLEASE. LET ME HELP YOU.
I DON'T NEED YOUR HELP.

EFF--
PLEASE GO.

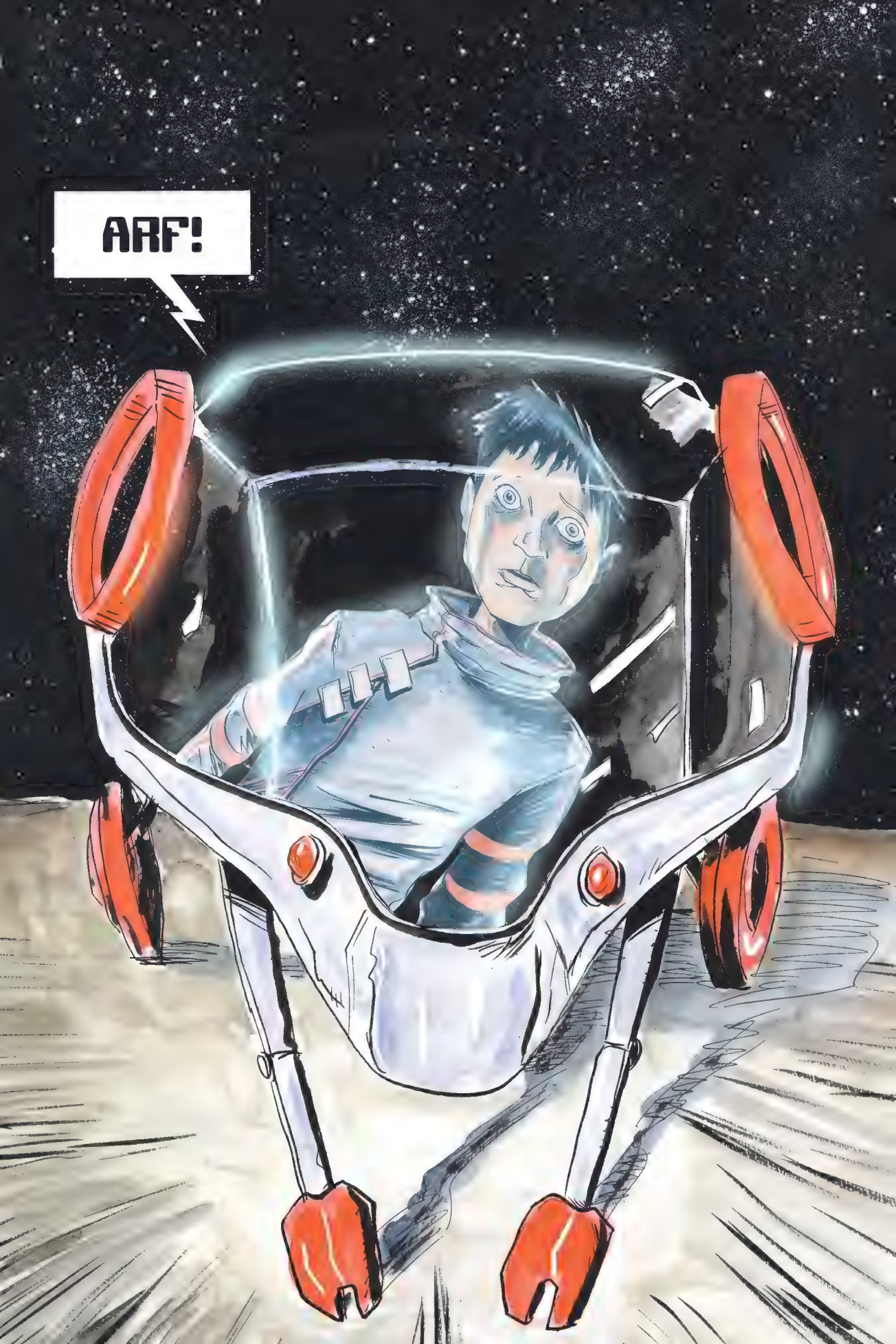
THE PLANET SAMPSON.
NOW.
THOOOOM
THE HELL WAS THAT?
HRRN... DRILLER DON'T LIKE CAVES.
CHOOOM
IT'S THE GNISHIAN SHIPS! THEY'RE BOMBING!
NO!
EFFIE, WAIT!
DON'T CALL ME THAT!
PLEASE, IT'S NOT SAFE!
MY PEOPLE ARE OUT THERE, ANDY!

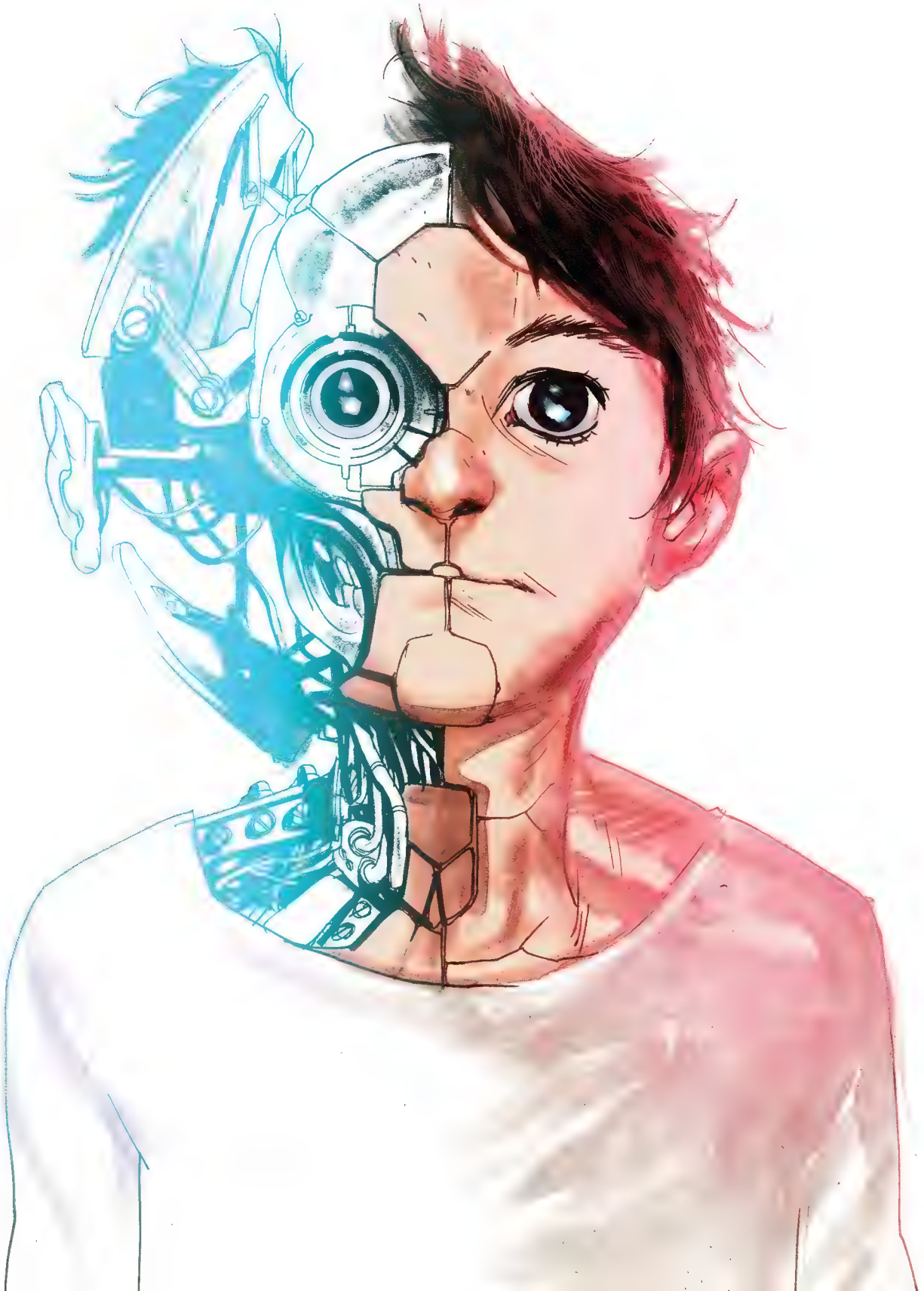
NO!
THE BETWEEN... THEY'RE DEAD.
...THEY'RE ALL DEAD, ANDY.

I'M SORRY, EFF. I'M SO SORRY.

VARIANT
COVER
GALLERY

ZZZ...


ARF!



DESCENDER

ATLAS OF THE CORE PLANETS OF THE UNITED GALACTIC COUNCIL

NIYRATA (THE HUB WORLD): Former technological and cultural hub of the UGC and former home of the nine Embassy Cities. One city state for each of the core planets and races representing UGC. Now a devastated world, what's left of the UGC Council still resides there, clinging to power.

PHAGES (THE GHOST WORLD/HAUNTED PLANET): Home to a gaseous race called THE PHAGES. Their spectral, ghost-like appearance scared early explorers into thinking the planet was haunted. Basically a world full of ghosts with no solid matter. Cities and aliens all made of gases. The only non-gaseous species are a race of hostile 20-foot tall giants.

MATA:
A massive oceanic world devoid of any sentient life.

SAMPSON: The largest planet in the Megacosm. Formerly home to the largest human population. Sampson was hit hardest by the Harvester attacks and is now a devastated wasteland.

KNOSSOS:
The smallest Core planet in the Megacosm.

SILENOS: The unique atmosphere on Silenos makes all sound and vibration impossible, creating a totally silent world where the native race communicates by projecting telepathic hieroglyphs into the air.

AMUN: The greatest ally of the GNISHIANS. An insect-like race that live in underground hives.

GNISH: The largest planet and the home of the largest military force. Leaders in the anti-robot, anti-technology movement in the wake of the Harvesters. A race ruled by luddite zealots who preach independence and sovereignty for all worlds all the while working for more and more control of Megacosm space. Main funder of the Scrappers. Home to the MELTING PITS, massive gladitorial arenas where robots are made to fight to the death.

OSTRAKON: A desert wasteland devoid of all life. Contains the ruins of an ancient civilization that has long since gone extinct.

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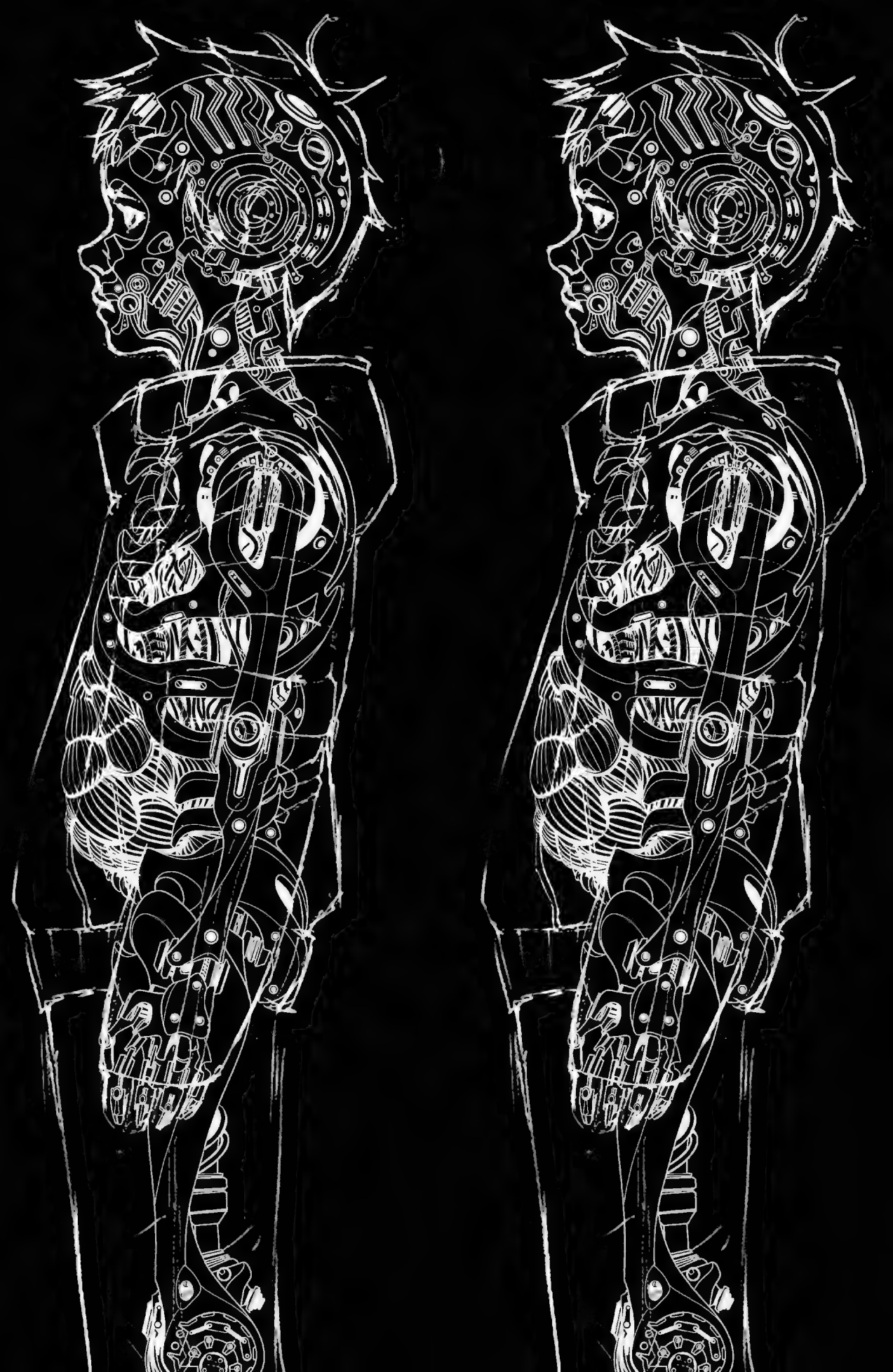

• THE DESCENDER TEAM •

JEFF LEMIRE: *New York Times* bestselling author Jeff Lemire has built a unique career as both the writer and artist of acclaimed literary graphic novels like *Essex County*, *The Underwater Welder*, *Sweet Tooth* and *Trillium* and also as one of the most popular writers of mainstream comics with acclaimed runs on such titles as *Extraordinary X-Men*, *Green Arrow*, *Animal Man* and *Hawkeye* for Marvel and DC Comics.

His next original graphic novel, *ROUGHNECK*, will be published by Simon and Schuster in October 2016.

In 2008 and in 2013 Jeff won the Shuster Award for Best Canadian Cartoonist. He has also received the Doug Wright Award for Best Emerging Talent and the American Library Association's prestigious Alex Award, recognizing books for adults with specific teen appeal. He has also been nominated for eight Eisner Awards, seven Harvey Awards and eight Shuster Awards.

In 2010 *Essex County* became the first graphic novel to be included in the prestigious Canada Reads contest making it to the final five and winning the people's choice vote as best Canadian novel of the decade. *Essex County* is currently in development at CBC as a live action television series with Lemire attached as executive producer.

He lives in Toronto with his wife and son.

DUSTIN NGUYEN: Dustin is a *New York Times* bestselling American comic artist whose body of work includes – *Wildcats v3.0*, *The Authority Revolution*, *Batman*, *Superman/Batman*, *Detective Comics*, *Batgirl*, *and Batman: Streets of Gotham*. He is also credited as co-writing and illustrating *Justice League Beyond*, illustrating Vertigo's *American Vampire: Lord of Nightmares* with writer Scott Snyder, and co-creator of DC's all ages series, *BATMAN: Lil Gotham* written by himself and Derek Fridolfs. Aside from providing cover illustrations for the majority of his own books, his cover art can also be found on titles ranging from *Batman Beyond* , *Batgirl*, *Justice League: Generation Lost*, *Supernatural* and *Friday the 13th*, to numerous other DC, Marvel, Darkhorse, Boom, IDW, and Image Comics' covers.

Currently, he illustrates *Descender*, a monthly comic published through Image Comics in which he is also co-creator alongside artist/writer Jeff Lemire.

Outside of comics, Dustin also moonlights as a conceptual artist for toys and consumer products, games, and animation.

He enjoys sleeping, driving, and sketching things he cares about.

STEVE WANDS: Steve is a comic book letterer. Working on top titles at Image Comics, DC, Vertigo, BOOM! Studios, Archaia, Random House, and Kodansha Comics (to name a few). He also designs, inks, and illustrates for those, and other, companies. When not working like a maniac he spends time with his wife and sons in the greatest state known to man...New Jersey. Oh, and he drinks a lot of coffee.

"Jeff Lemire has dreamt up an emotional, imaginative new universe, lavishly brought to life by the great Dustin Nguyen. I can't wait to see where they take TIM-21 next." —BRIAN K. VAUGHAN (*SAGA*)

"A beautiful cosmic opera and nuanced think piece, balancing the fear of the unknown with the spirit of adventure. Driven by the gorgeous visuals of artist Dustin Nguyen, ***DESCENDER*** is a book on the rise." —IGN

Ten years after planet-sized robots called Harvesters appeared and wreaked havoc across the galaxy, a young android named TIM-21 wakes to find that all robots have been outlawed. But TIM may hold the secrets to the Harvesters in his machine DNA and he quickly becomes the most wanted robot in the universe. With bounty hunters and threats lurking at every turn, TIM embarks on a mind-blowing adventure through the stars along with his robot dog, Bandit, and the lumbering mining droid, Driller.

A heartfelt, rip-roaring science fiction odyssey written by Jeff Lemire (***Sweet Tooth, Essex County, Royal City***) and featuring beautiful fully painted artwork by Dustin Nguyen (***Li'l Gotham, WildC.A.T.s***).

SCIENCE FICTION
RATED M / MATURE
IMAGECOMICS.COM
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I REPEAT-- COME IN, DIRISHU OUTPOST. DO YOU READ US?
SEVENTEEN YEARS AGO.
THIS IS DIRISHU OUTPOST. AND, BOY, IS IT GOOD TO HEAR YOU!
WE WERE STARTING TO GET A LITTLE LONELY DOWN HERE. PLEASE TELL ME YOU BROUGHT US SOME COMPANY?
OH YEAH. WE GOT TWO NICE BIG FRIENDS FOR YOU. GETTING READY TO DROP THEM NOW.
THEY EVEN GOT QUONTECH'S NEWEST PERSONALITY UPGRADES...THOUGH I DON'T THINK THEY'RE VERY TALKATIVE, SO IT PROBABLY DON'T MATTER MUCH.
WE'LL TAKE WHAT WE CAN GET.

WELL, HERE THEY COME. DROPPING NOW!

SITE OF PROPOSED MINES HAS BEEN LOCATED. LOCKING ONTO TARGET.

CONGRATULATIONS, DIRISHU...YOU ARE NOW OFFICIALLY A UGC MINING COLONY!

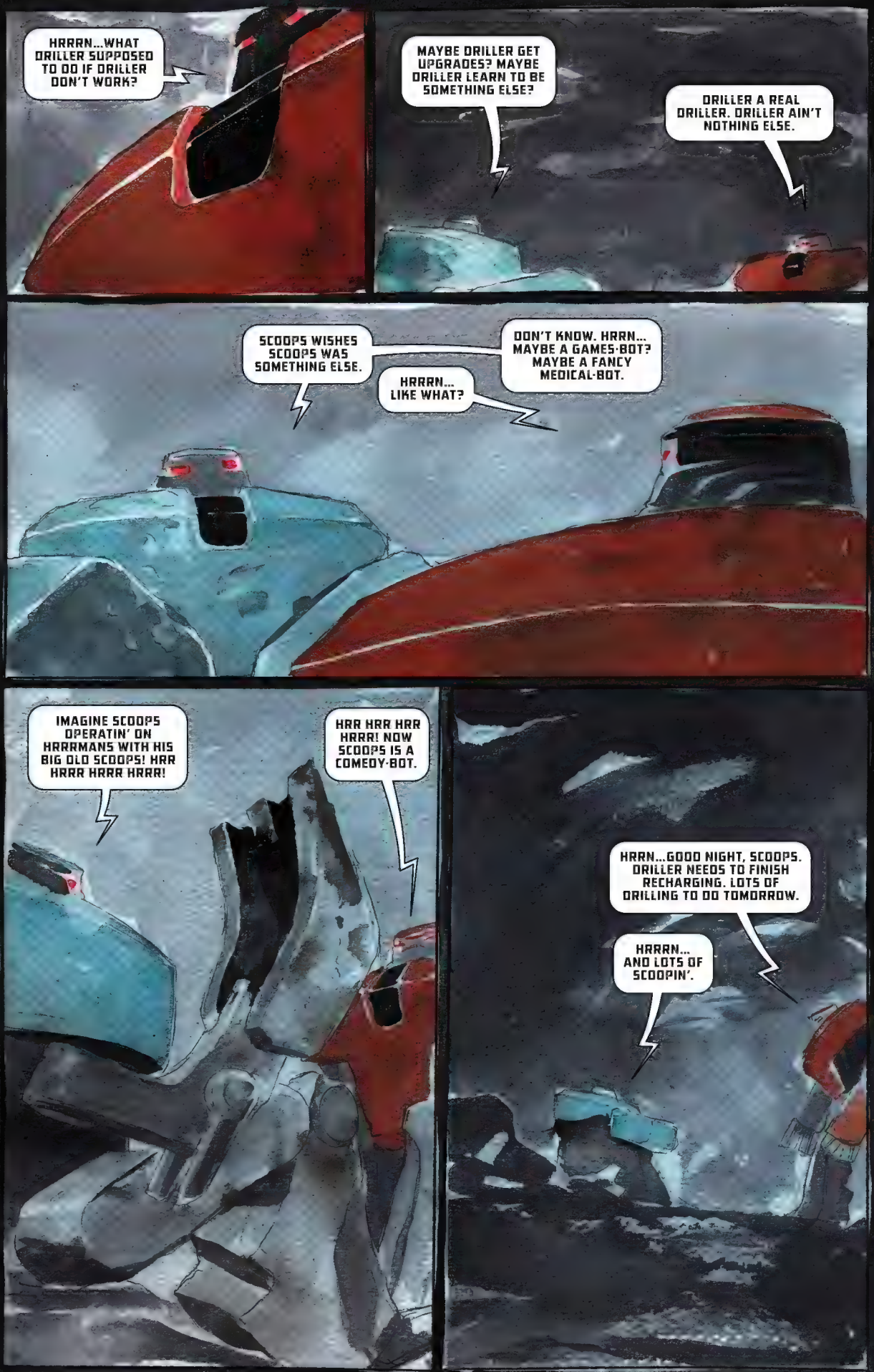
WOO-HOO!

FIFTEEN YEARS AGO.
OKAY, LET'S SEE WHAT WE GOT HERE...
SO YOU TWO HUNKS OF SCRAP ARE PRETTY MUCH OBSOLETE. SEE, WE JUST GOT A HALF-DOZEN NEW HYPER-DRILLS IN FROM SAMPSON. BUT YOU'RE STILL IN WORKING CONDITION, SO OF COURSE THEY GAVE YOU TO ME.
HUMPH! GOOD OL' HENRY TUSK ALWAYS GETS THE JUNK THE OTHERS DON'T WANNA USE NO MORE!
YOU, WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
HRRN... VX-333Z-NOZ4.
HELL, I AIN'T EVER GONNA REMEMBER THAT. YOU'RE SCOOPS.
AND YOU, YOU'RE DRILLER. GOT IT?
GOT IT HRRRMAN. I'M DRILLER.
HRRM...SCOOPS IS SCOOPS. HE'S DRILLER.

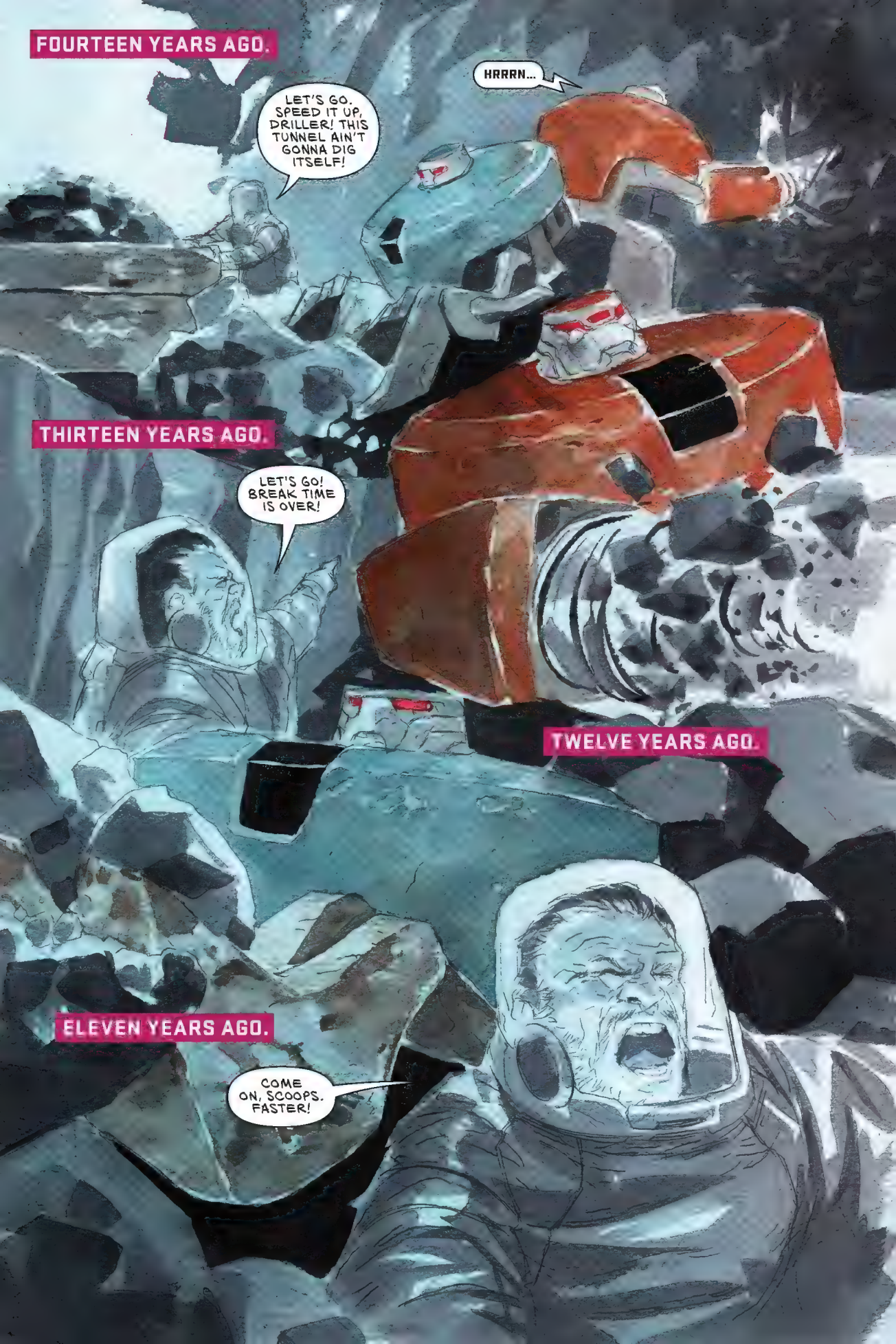
VERY GOOD. SEE, WHO SAYS YOU INDUSTRIAL BOTS ARE DUMB, HUH? NOW COME ON, BUT I'M GONNA WARN YOU, YOU AIN'T GONNA LIKE WORKING WITH ME.
SEE, I DO DEEP MINING. REAL DEEP. YEAH, THEY LIKE TO SHOVE GOOD OL' HENRY TUSK WAY DOWN IN THE TUNNELS NO ONE ELSE WANTS TO WORK!
CHANCES ARE, I'LL WEAR YOU BOTH OUT BY THE END OF THE YEAR. LIKE I SAID, THEY GIVE ME ALL THE CRAP THEY DON'T WANNA USE NO MORE, 'CAUSE THEY KNOW I'M PROBABLY JUST GONNA BREAK IT.
BUT IT'S EITHER THAT, OR YOU GO TO THE SCRAP HEAP NOW. SO COUNT YER BLESSINGS.
HRRN...YEAH, SCOOPS REAL LUCKY.
HRRN...DRILLER SO LUCKY.
YOU GETTING A SMART MOUTH WITH ME, SCOOPS?
HRRRN...SCOOPS IS SORRY. SCOOPS HERE TO SCOOP, NOT TO GET A SMART MOUTH.
GOOD, 'CAUSE I WON'T PUT UP WITH NO SMART-ASS ROBBIES IN MY TUNNEL, YOU GOT IT?!
SCOOPS GOT IT.
GOOD. THEN GET TO IT. I WANT TWENTY MORE METERS REMOVED BY SHIFT'S END. SO, DRILLER, START DRILLIN', AND, SCOOPS, START SCOOPIN'!
SCOOPS GOT IT.

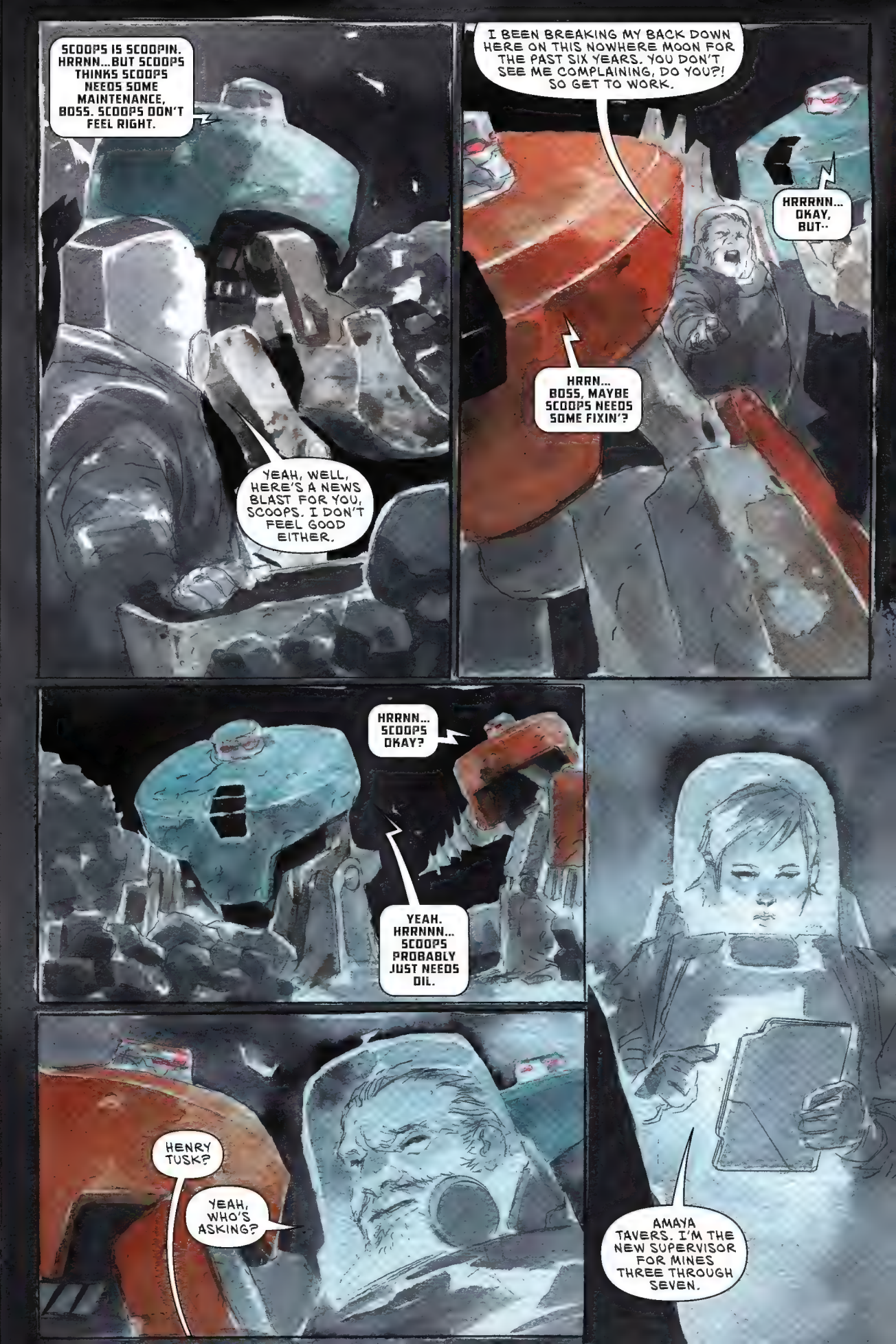
BLEEP
HRRN...DRILLER AWAKE, OR DRILLER IN SLEEP MODE?
HRRN...WHAT'S IT LOOK LIKE? HRRN... DRILLER RECHARGING. SCOOPS SHOULD BE RECHARGING TOO.
SCOOPS IS FULLY CHARGED. HRRRN...DON'T WANNA CHARGE NO MORE. SCOOPS WANTS TO TALK.

HRRNN...WHAT YOU WANNA TALK ABOUT?
WONDERING WHERE'D THEY HAVE DRILLER DRILLIN' BEFORE HRRRMAN HENRY TUSK TOOK US DOWN HERE TOGETHER?
HRRN...DRILLER OUT AT MINE SIX. DRILLER DRILL IN MINE SIX FOR TWO YEARS. DRILLER DRILL GOOD, BUT THEN THEY GOT BIG, FANCY NEW DRILLS.
WHERE HRRRMANS HAVE SCOOPS SCOOPIN'?
MINE FOUR. NICE MINE. NICER HRRRMANS THAN HENRY TUSK THERE.
AIN'T NO NICER HRRRMANS TO DRILLER. JUST MAKE ME DRILL. NEVER ASK ME NOTHING. NEVER TALK TO ME. DRILLER JUST A DRILLER TO HRRRMNS.
HRRRRMANS DON'T KNOW NO BETTER. HRRRMNS JUST THINK WE'RE HUNKS OF JUNK.
HRRRMANS ARE HUNKS OF JUNK.
HRR HRR HRRR HRRR! YOU'RE FUNNY, DRILLER.
YEAH, DRILLER A REAL THRILLER.
SCOOPS WAS TALKING TO SOME CATERING-BOTS IN MINE FOUR LAST YEAR. SCOOPS HEAR OF A PLACE IN SPACE WHERE ROBBIES ARE FREE. PLACE WHERE WE DON'T HAVE TO WORK NO MORE.


HRRRN...WHAT DRILLER SUPPOSED TO DO IF DRILLER DON'T WORK?
MAYBE DRILLER GET UPGRADES? MAYBE DRILLER LEARN TO BE SOMETHING ELSE?
DRILLER A REAL DRILLER. DRILLER AIN'T NOTHING ELSE.
SCOOPS WISHES SCOOPS WAS SOMETHING ELSE.
DON'T KNOW. HRRN... MAYBE A GAMES-BOT? MAYBE A FANCY MEDICAL-BOT.
HRRRN... LIKE WHAT?
IMAGINE SCOOPS OPERATIN' ON HRRRMANS WITH HIS BIG OLD SCOOPS! HRR HRRR HRRR HRRR!
HRR HRR HRR HRRR! NOW SCOOPS IS A COMEDY-BOT.
HRRN...GOOD NIGHT, SCOOPS. DRILLER NEEDS TO FINISH RECHARGING. LOTS OF DRILLING TO DO TOMORROW.
HRRRN... AND LOTS OF SCOOPIN'.

DRILLER?
HRRRN... WHAT?
SCOOPS GLAD SCOOPS IS WITH DRILLER. BETTER THAN BEING WITH NO DRILLER.
HRRRN...GO TO SLEEP, SCOOPS, OR DRILLER'S GONNA GET ALL RUSTED UP OVER HERE.
HRR HR HRRR!
HRRR HRRR HRRR!
GOOD NIGHT, DRILLER.
HRRRN... 'NIGHT, SCOOPS.


FOURTEEN YEARS AGO.
LET'S GO. SPEED IT UP, DRILLER! THIS TUNNEL AIN'T GONNA DIG ITSELF!
HRRRN...
THIRTEEN YEARS AGO.
LET'S GO! BREAK TIME IS OVER!
TWELVE YEARS AGO.
ELEVEN YEARS AGO.
COME ON, SCOOPS. FASTER!


SCOOPS IS SCOOPIN. HRRNN...BUT SCOOPS THINKS SCOOPS NEEDS SOME MAINTENANCE, BOSS. SCOOPS DON'T FEEL RIGHT.
YEAH, WELL, HERE'S A NEWS BLAST FOR YOU, SCOOPS. I DON'T FEEL GOOD EITHER.
I BEEN BREAKING MY BACK DOWN HERE ON THIS NOWHERE MOON FOR THE PAST SIX YEARS. YOU DON'T SEE ME COMPLAINING, DO YOU?! SO GET TO WORK.
HRRRNN... OKAY, BUT--
HRRN... BOSS, MAYBE SCOOPS NEEDS SOME FIXIN'?
HRRNN... SCOOPS OKAY?
YEAH. HRRNNN... SCOOPS PROBABLY JUST NEEDS OIL.
HENRY TUSK?
YEAH, WHO'S ASKING?
AMAYA TAVERS. I'M THE NEW SUPERVISOR FOR MINES THREE THROUGH SEVEN.

AH, SORRY. I, AH--I DIDN'T GET THE BLAST THAT WE WERE GETTING A NEW COMPANY WOMAN DOWN HERE.
SUPERVISOR.
HUH?
SUPERVISOR, NOT "COMPANY WOMAN."
HEH, YEAH. SORRY.
WOW, YOU'VE GOT A COUPLE OF REALLY OLD BOTS DOWN HERE, HUH? THEY STILL WORKING OKAY?
OH YEAH. THESE TWO ARE GOOD OL' BOTS. WE'RE STILL MOVING FIFTEEN TO TWENTY METERS A DAY DOWN HERE. NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.
FIFTEEN TO TWENTY? THAT'S A BIT LOW. I'M GOING TO NEED YOU TO PUSH FOR TWENTY-FIVE.
TWENTY-FIVE?! WITH THESE OLD HUNKS OF JUNK?
I THOUGHT YOU SAID THEY WERE IN WORKING ORDER? BECAUSE IF THEY'RE NOT, OR YOU'RE NOT UP TO THE QUOTA, I CAN FIND SOMEONE ELSE WHO IS.
OH NO, MA'AM. WE CAN MANAGE TWENTY-FIVE. NO PROBLEM HERE.
GOOD. GET TO IT THEN, MR. TUSK.
YES, MA'AM.
HRRRN... TWENTY-FIVE METERS OF ROCK IS TOO MUCH, BOSS. SHOULD HAVE TOLD HER SO.
WELL, YER GONNA HAVE TO FIND A WAY, DRILLER. I AIN'T GONNA LET YOU GET ME FIRED. GOT SIX KIDS BACK ON NIYRATA. I CAN'T AFFORD TO LOSE THIS POSTING!
SO GET TO IT!
HRRNN...

BLEEP
HRRN... SCOOPS, YOU AWAKE?
SCOOPS? WANNA TALK ABOUT STUFF?
HRRRN...SCOOPS DON'T FEEL MUCH LIKE TALKIN' NO MORE. SCOOPS DON'T FEEL RIGHT. SCOOPS IS TIRED, NEED MORE CHARGE.
HRRRN...OKAY. 'NIGHT, SCOOPS.

TEN YEARS AGO.
THOOM

HRRRR...
SCOOPS!
WARNING! LETHAL GAS POCKET DETECTED. WARNING!
SHIT!
KRSHHH
WARNING! LETHAL GAS POCKET DETECTED. WARNING!
GAS POCKET SEALED.
CRIPES.
YOU IDIOT!
SCOOPS IS SORRY. SCOOPS IS BROKEN.
YOU'RE SORRY?! HOW THE HELL DID YOU NOT DETECT THAT GAS POCKET?! YOU KNOW WHAT THIS MEANS?! SEAL UP THIS TUNNEL NOW.
B--BUT SCOOPS IS BROKEN.

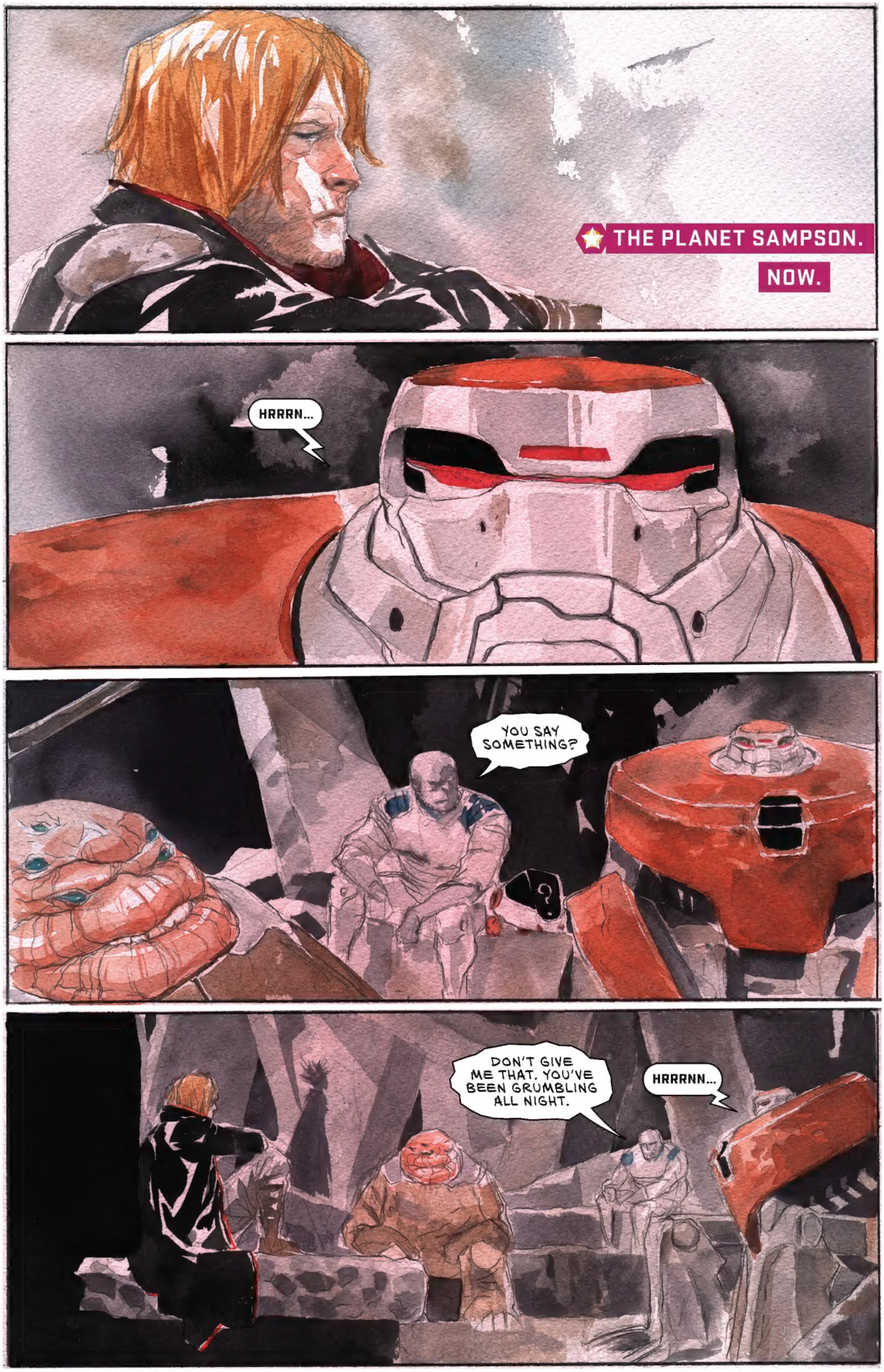
CLANG
YOU'RE BROKEN?! WHAT ABOUT ME?! YOU THINK THEY'RE GONNA GIVE US ANOTHER JOB?!
HRRRMMMAN, STOP!
HRRNN SCRRRPPSS...
CLANG
THIS WAS ALL I COULD GET! I'M FINISHED!
KZZZT
HRRRN...STOP, HRRRMAN.
KKT!
PUT ME DOWN, DRILLER, OR SO HELP ME, I'LL HAVE YOU SCRAPPED TOO!
HRRRNN...
TUSK?!
I--I'M FINE. EVERYTHING IS FINE DOWN HERE.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?! WE GOTTA GO! THERE'S AN EMERGENCY EVACUATION!

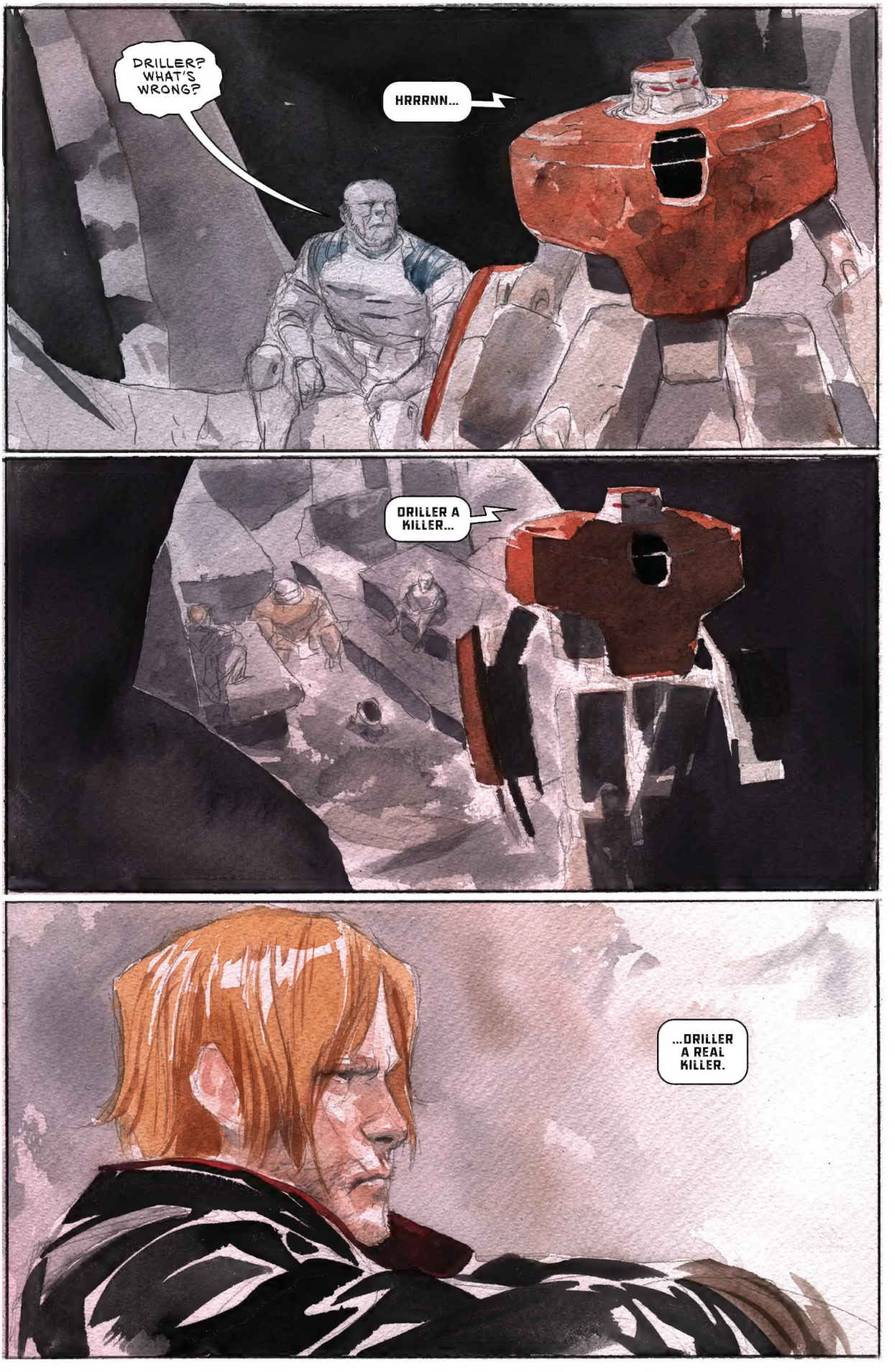
NO, NO...IT'S FINE. I SEALED THE LEAK. JUST A TINY LITTLE GAS POCKET. NOTHING BIG. NO PROBLEMS HERE.
WHAT?! DON'T YOU HAVE YOUR COMM ON?! THERE'S SOME KIND OF CRAZY ATTACKS HAPPENING ON NIYRATA.
ATTACKS?
UGC DOESN'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON. BUT IT'S BAD. WE'VE ALL BEEN RECALLED. WE GOTTA GO!
I--I GOT KIDS ON NIYRATA. SHIT.
HRRNN....
HRRRRRRR
HRRNNNN...
WHAT ARE YOU DOING!? WE'RE DONE WITH WORK, YOU IDIOT! DIDN'T YOU HEAR?! THE UGC IS UNDER ATTACK! I GOTTA GET OUT OF HERE!
HRRRNNNNNNNNN...
HRRRRRRR

HRRRRRRMMMANS!
VRRRRRRRR
DRILLER, STOP! WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU--
PT-SSSSS
NO MORE HHRRRMANS...
KKKT!

SCOOPS?
DRILLER DID SOMETHING, SCOOPS...
DRILLER DID *SOMETHING BAD.*

"SOMETHING REAL *REAL* BAD."
R.Tavers


THE PLANET SAMPSON.
NOW.
HRRRN...
YOU SAY SOMETHING?
DON'T GIVE ME THAT. YOU'VE BEEN GRUMBLING ALL NIGHT.
HRRRNN...


DRILLER? WHAT'S WRONG?
HRRRNN...
DRILLER A KILLER...
...DRILLER A REAL KILLER.